

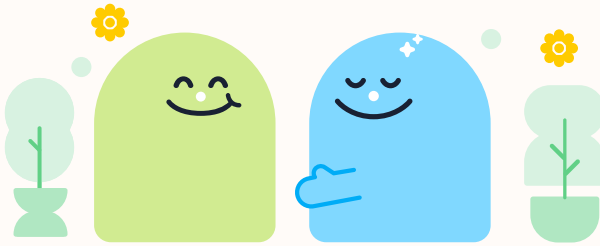


The Hidden Link: How Your Gums Affect Your Heart

A guide to understanding how healthy gums
can support a healthy heart



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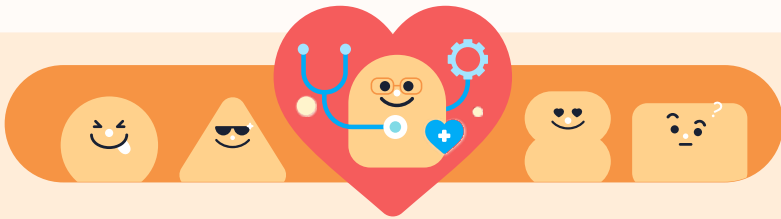
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Introduction to gum health and heart health

When we think about heart health, brushing our teeth probably isn't the first thing that comes to mind. Most of us picture exercising, eating a balanced diet, or managing stress. As surprising as it may sound, your oral health plays a significantly larger role in your overall well-being than you might expect.



To set things into perspective, World Health Organisation (WHO) reports that cardiovascular diseases remain the leading cause of death globally, claiming nearly 18 million lives in 2025.



In terms of oral health, NIH Medline Plus reports that around 50% of adults worldwide have some form of gum disease, and many don't even realise it.

The numbers don't stop there.

We see how oral health goes hand in hand with heart health in studies done by Harvard Health, which found that people with gum disease are up to three times more likely to experience a heart attack or stroke. It's essential to understand, now more than ever, how these two systems may be linked and why protecting your oral health is crucial; what signs to look out for, and how simple habits can make a significant difference. Let's get started!

Understanding gum disease

Gum disease is not just one single condition. It progresses in stages, starting with gingivitis and potentially advancing to periodontitis if left untreated. Recognising the difference between the two can help you take preventive measures and protect your long-term oral (and overall) health.

The first stage of gum disease starts with gingivitis. It is typically caused by the accumulation of plaque along the gumline. At this stage, the inflammation is limited to the gums and hasn't affected the supporting bone. Don't worry, gingivitis is reversible with proper care.

But if ignored, gingivitis can progress into periodontitis—a more serious and often chronic form of gum disease. In this stage, the inner layer of the gum and bone will begin to pull away from the teeth, forming pockets that can become infected. Over time, this can lead to bone loss, gum recession, and even tooth loss.

Feature	Gingivitis	Periodontitis
Severity	Mild	Moderate to severe
Affected areas	Gums only	Gums and supporting bone
Symptoms	Red, swollen, or bleeding gums	Gum recession, loose teeth, deep pockets
Pain	Usually painless	May cause discomfort or pain
Reversibility	Fully reversible with proper care	Manageable but not fully reversible
Treatment	Improved oral hygiene, dental cleaning	Deep cleaning (scaling and root planing), and possibly surgery
Risk of tooth loss	Very low	Higher risk if left untreated

Signs of gum disease

- Red, swollen, or tender gums
- Bleeding when brushing or flossing
- Bad breath or a bad taste in the mouth
- Receding gums
- Loose or shifting teeth
- Visible pus around the gums or teeth (in advanced stages)

Risk factors for gum disease

- Poor oral hygiene habits
- Smoking or tobacco use
- Diabetes
- Hormonal changes (e.g. pregnancy, menopause)
- Certain medications (that reduce saliva or affect gum tissue)
- Conditions that lower immunity (e.g. HIV, cancer treatment)



The science behind the link

It's completely normal to have bacteria in our mouths. Fun fact: our oral cavity hosts hundreds of species, most of which are harmless. But when oral hygiene slips, these harmful bacteria can multiply and trigger inflammation in the gums, leading to gum disease.

This chronic inflammation doesn't just affect our mouth; it can affect our entire body, including our cardiovascular system.

How does this happen? One way is through the entry of bacteria into the bloodstream. It's when the gums are inflamed or bleeding, bacteria and inflammatory markers can travel through blood vessels, potentially contributing to the buildup of plaque in arteries, raising the risk of heart attacks, strokes, and other cardiovascular issues.

Research continues to highlight this connection. While there hasn't been solid proof that shows a direct cause-and-effect relationship, studies consistently point towards the theory that people with gum disease are more likely to suffer from heart disease and related complications than those with healthy gums.

The gut and health connection: Oral-gut axis

Now that we know how the gums are connected to your gut, there's a term for the communication network between the mouth and the digestive system. It's called the oral-gut axis.

A balanced gut microbiome helps limit the overgrowth of harmful bacteria in the mouth, while an imbalanced gut can increase the risk of gum inflammation and oral infections.

Picture your gut as the garden and your mouth as the front lawn. A healthy gut is like a well-tended garden – it has the right balance of nutrients, helpful organisms, and strong roots that support the whole ecosystem.

When your “garden” is thriving, it helps keep the “front lawn” (your mouth) green and healthy too, by limiting the spread of weeds (harmful bacteria) and keeping the soil (your immune system) strong.

But if your gut becomes unbalanced—like a garden overrun with weeds or poor soil—it can affect everything around it. The front lawn starts to suffer too, leading to more plaque, inflammation, and gum problems.

Since the gut and heart are closely linked through systemic inflammation and immune responses, it's no surprise that what's good for your gut is also good for your heart, and of course, your gums.

Importance of regular check-ups

Even if everything feels fine, regular dental check-ups play a crucial role in maintaining both oral and overall health. During these visits, your dentist can help you check for early signs of gum disease, tooth decay, oral infections, and even potential warning signs of serious conditions like oral cancer or diabetes.

Other than that, they'll also examine your gums for inflammation, measure any gum recession, and check for pockets around your teeth that may show early signs of periodontitis.

By visiting every six months, or as recommended, you're giving yourself the chance to detect these small issues before they end up becoming bigger (and more expensive) problems.

Tips on how to keep your smile bright and your heart healthy

Taking care of your mouth isn't just about fresh breath or a sparkling smile; it's also a smart move for your heart. Building a strong oral hygiene routine is one of the simplest ways to reduce inflammation, prevent the buildup of harmful bacteria, and protect your overall health.

Starting with the basics: brush your teeth twice a day using a fluoride toothpaste, and floss daily to remove plaque between the teeth and along the gumline.

When needed, a fluoride mouthwash can also be helpful to maintain gum health. However, the National Health Service (NHS) cautions against using it right after brushing your teeth.

Doing so might wash away the concentrated fluoride from your toothpaste, which serves to strengthen your tooth enamel and, in turn, prevent cavities and tooth decay.

Coach's reminder

"Think you've mastered brushing and flossing? Ask your dentist or dental hygienist for a quick demo during your next visit, most people miss key spots without even realising it!"

Jasmin Sharif
Naluri Medical Advisor

Here are a few extra tips from Jasmin Sharif, Naluri Medical Advisor:

- Replace your toothbrush every 3 to 4 months, or sooner if the bristles are frayed
- Avoid eating or drinking anything for at least 30 minutes after brushing
- Eat foods that are rich in fluoride, such as spinach, potatoes, grapes, raisins, black tea, and seafood like shrimp, crabs

If you're a parent, teach your kids to incorporate these healthy habits early on. Take note that it's not recommended for children under the age of 6 to swallow toothpaste, as excessive fluoride can harm developing teeth and cause fluorosis (fluoride-induced tooth discolouration).

Taking action

Now that you know how closely your oral health is linked to your heart, it's time to take small, consistent steps that make a big difference. All you need is to keep a healthy routine and be consistent with it! Here's a simple checklist to help you start:

5 steps to better oral and heart health

- Brush twice a day with fluoride toothpaste
- Floss daily to remove plaque between teeth
- Eat a balanced, fibre-rich diet that supports both your gut and gums
- Stay active and manage stress
- Visit your dentist every 6 months



If you're looking to learn more, check out trusted sources like your local dental or heart foundations, or even better, your local healthcare provider for personalised advice and support.



"Brush the teeth you want to keep, floss the ones you want to save—for your smile and your heart. Daily brushing and flossing may seem small, but the impact on your health is huge."

– Jasmin Sharif, Naluri Medical Advisor

Conclusion

The connection between your mouth and body is stronger than it seems, and the choices you make every day count—what you eat, how you brush, and when you visit the dentist—can all work in your favour.

From reducing harmful bacteria to lowering inflammation, taking care of your gums is a powerful step toward protecting your heart.

It's never too early or too late to start. Taking these small, consistent steps today can help you live better, longer, and with confidence.

Naluri resources











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[Healthy Habits for a Happy Heart](#)

Articles [What Your Heart's Been Trying to Tell You: 7 Subtle Signs It Needs More Love](#)
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