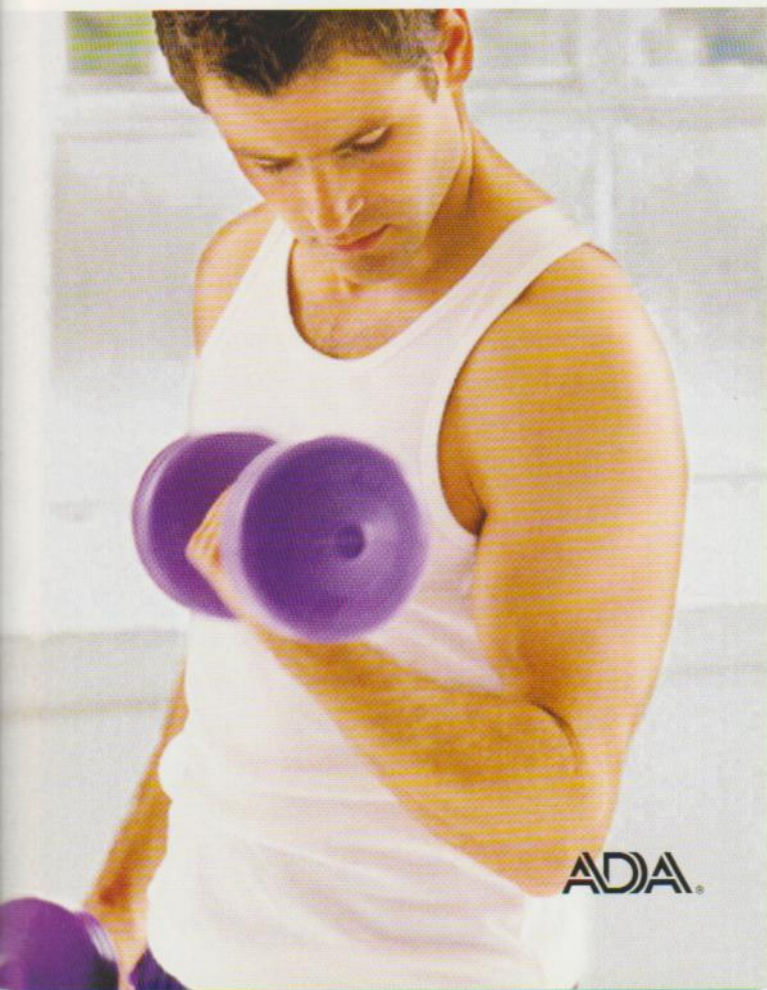
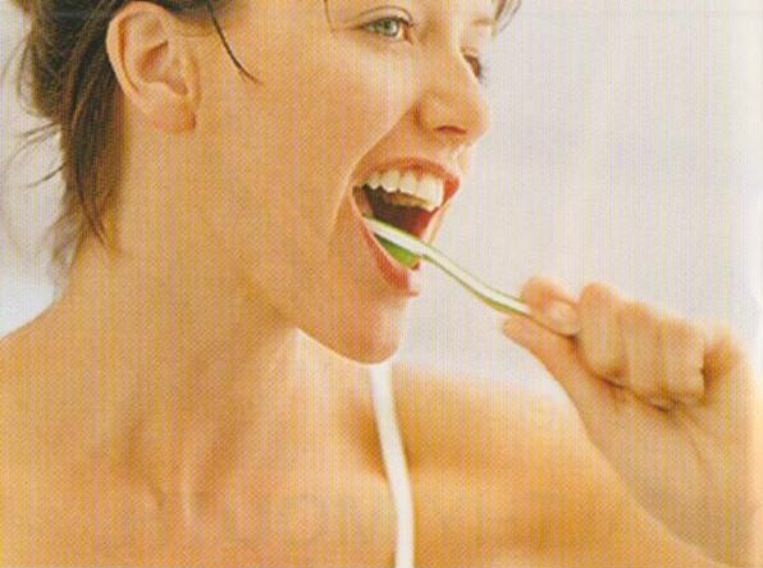


A close-up photograph of two toothbrushes in a clear plastic holder. One toothbrush is yellow and the other is blue and white. The background is a warm, golden-yellow gradient.

Making the
Connection:

HEALTHY MOUTH, HEALTHY BODY





Although more studies are needed, researchers suspect that the bacteria and inflammation associated with gum disease play a role in “systemic” problems — meaning they can affect the body as a whole.

Gum (periodontal) disease is an infection of the gums that can destroy bone and other tissues that support the teeth. Periodontal disease develops when a sticky film of bacteria, called plaque, is allowed to build up on the teeth. Although a coating of plaque constantly forms on the teeth, with proper daily cleaning most plaque can be removed before periodontal disease develops.

Brushing and flossing daily helps keep your gums from becoming irritated by toxic agents produced by plaque bacteria. In time, plaque can harden into tartar (also called calculus). Plaque then can build up on the rough surface of the calculus, making it more difficult to keep teeth clean.

In the early stages of periodontal disease (gingivitis), gums may become red or swollen, and may even bleed. In time, gums can separate from teeth and deep spaces called pockets can form. Bacteria can collect in these pockets, and their toxins cause inflammation of the gums, which can destroy the bone that anchors teeth. If the disease is left untreated, teeth may eventually become loose, fall out or require removal by a dentist.



Healthy Gingiva (Gums)



Periodontitis

HEALTHY MOUTH, HEALTHY BODY

Maintaining healthy gums is particularly important for people who are susceptible to bacterial pneumonia. This group includes people prone to respiratory infections, those with compromised immune systems, and the elderly.

Studies further indicate that pregnant women who have gum disease may be at increased risk for pre-term delivery, which in turn increases the risk of having a low-birth-weight baby.

People with diabetes often have periodontal disease, as well. Recent studies show that periodontal disease can make it more difficult for diabetics to control their blood sugar. If periodontal disease in diabetics is treated, however, their sugar control can improve.

PREVENTING PERIODONTAL DISEASE

Given the potential links between the bacteria that cause gum disease and systemic diseases, prevention of periodontal disease is an important step in maintaining overall health. In most cases, periodontal disease can be prevented with good daily oral hygiene and regular professional care.

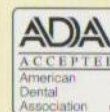
To keep your gums healthy, brush your teeth thoroughly twice a day. Use an ADA Accepted toothpaste with fluoride to help prevent tooth decay. Proper brushing removes plaque from the inner, outer and chewing surfaces of the teeth before it can harden into calculus.



Cleaning thoroughly between your teeth daily with floss or another type of interdental cleaner also is important in preventing gum disease. Such daily cleaning is the only way to remove plaque that collects in the spaces between your teeth, where your toothbrush can't reach.

If you need extra help controlling plaque that forms above the gum line, your dentist may recommend using an ADA-Accepted anti-microbial mouth rinse as part of your daily oral hygiene routine.

When choosing a dental care product, look for those that display the American Dental Association's Seal of Acceptance, your



assurance that they have met ADA standards of safety and effectiveness.

Regularly scheduled professional examinations and cleanings also are necessary to prevent gum disease. Professional cleanings are the only way to remove calculus, which traps plaque bacteria along the gum line. Depending on your oral health, your dentist may suggest additional treatment or more frequent professional cleanings. Preventing and treating gum disease in its early stages are the best ways to keep your smile healthy.

Eating a balanced diet and limiting snacks also can reduce your risk of tooth decay and gum disease.

Tell your dentist about your overall health, particularly if you have had any recent illnesses or have any chronic conditions. Provide a health history including medication use — both prescription and over-the-counter products — and let your dentist know if there have been any changes. This will help ensure that you get the most complete and appropriate care.

Think of good oral care as part of a healthy lifestyle. Limiting your exposure to the bacteria that cause gum disease not only will improve your oral health, but also may protect your cardiovascular system, reduce your risk of pneumonia and, if you are pregnant, improve your chances of having a healthy, full-term baby.

Now isn't that worth a healthy smile?

We live in a health-conscious society. People of all ages recognize the importance of a healthy lifestyle: a balanced diet including plenty of water, regular exercise, and a good night's sleep. But did you know that good oral hygiene is also a step toward a healthier life?



Recent research suggests there may be a link between gum disease and other health problems. Several studies, for example, connect gum disease with the development of cardiovascular problems. There is evidence that mouth bacteria associated with gum disease may be linked to heart disease, artery blockages, and stroke. Additional research suggests that the bacteria that cause gum disease can be a contributing factor in bacterial pneumonia, which also can have serious consequences.



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