

Men's Health

ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION AND DENTAL DISEASE

What Your Teeth Can Tell You about Your Penis

Ignoring your chompers in the bathroom might cost you in the bedroom

BY DANIELLE AUSTIN, IMAGE FROM THINKSTOCK

Skimping on good-brushing habits might leave you with a rotten mouth—and a deflated penis. Poor dental hygiene may hamper your ability to get hard, finds new preliminary research from Taiwan.

In the study, men with erectile dysfunction (ED) were 79 percent more likely to have been diagnosed with chronic periodontal disease (CPD) than guys without ED. CPD is an infection that occurs when the gums pull away from the teeth, creating deep pockets that harbor bacteria and allow the bugs to spread to the bone surrounding the teeth.

(It's not just bad brushing—your other habits might be sinking your stiffy, too. Find out the **8 Ways to Protect Your Erection.**)

Chronic inflammation caused by gum disease may damage your endothelial cells, which form the lining on all of your blood vessels—including those in your penis. The endothelial damage can result in impaired blood flow, leaving you limp in the sack, says Larry Lipshultz, M.D., a urology advisor for *Men's Health*.

(Because the blood vessels to the penis are about 25 percent the size of the ones to the coronaries, ED can often serve as an early warning sign for heart problems and vascular disease. So be sure to consult your doctor to make sure your member isn't the only malfunction.)

Can Cleaning Your Dirty Mouth Help Your ED?

The researchers suggest tooth extraction may help reduce the ED by eliminating the inflammation. But thankfully, that's a last resort here in the U.S.

Instead, if the disease is caught in the early stages, treatment can be as simple as a few deep cleanings from your dentist. If it's discovered later on, you might require gum surgery to reduce the pockets and restore some of the bone loss, says Sally J. Cram, D.D.S, consumer advisor for the American Dental Association (ADA).

Once you have the disease under control, she suggests scheduling more frequent cleanings—every 3 months rather than 6 months. (Regular appointments are also important because **Your Dentist Can Spot These 6 Serious Health Problems.**)

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People who have had periodontal disease in the past are more likely to get it again, so it's important that you take precautionary measures and monitor for symptoms.

"Most people who have the disease don't feel pain until it is in the advanced stages, so be sure to see your dentist if you experience red swollen gums, bleeding gums when brushing, bad breath, loose teeth, and receding gums," says Dr. Cram.

The good thing, though, is that periodontal disease is almost entirely preventable. Just brush your teeth for 2 minutes twice daily with a fluoride toothpaste—look for an ADA Seal of Acceptance for best results—floss once per day, and drag yourself to the dentist for regular cleanings and checkups, says Dr. Cram.

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