

# Preventing Gum Disease May Reduce Alzheimer's Risk

Research suggests that exercising regularly and drinking vegetable and fruit juices may delay the onset of Alzheimer's disease. But can improving your dental health also help?

## The connection between gum disease and Alzheimer's

A study<sup>1</sup> of over 100 pairs of identical twins in Sweden found that those with gum inflammation and periodontal disease<sup>2</sup> early in life were four times more likely to develop Alzheimer's disease.

While more research is needed to understand the inflammation-Alzheimer's connection, this confirms what many dentists have already known: A healthy mouth contributes to a health mind and body.

## What is gum disease?

Gum disease (or periodontal disease) is an inflammation of the gums due to plaque buildup. When plaque isn't removed, it hardens into tartar and produces toxins that break down gum tissue. This causes gums to pull away from your teeth and form pockets that fill with bacteria. If the disease progresses, the plaque and bacteria move further down into your gums, destroying the supporting bone that holds teeth in place and causing teeth to fall out.

## Reduce your risk of gum disease and Alzheimer's by adopting these practices:

- Visit your dentist regularly for cleanings and gum exams.
- Get tips from your dentist or dental hygienist about how to improve your oral care regimen.
- Brush your teeth twice a day.
- Floss daily.
- Eat a healthy, balanced diet.
- Avoid tobacco products.

**Did you know** nearly 5 million Americans have Alzheimer's disease? This number is expected to nearly triple to 14 million by 2060.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Source: 2006 study "Potentially modifiable risk factors for dementia in identical twins."

<sup>2</sup> Periodontal disease in this study was defined by lost or loose teeth.

<sup>3</sup> Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention article "Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias"



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