

Alzheimer's and Gum Disease

As you age, it's important to maintain the same oral health habits you learned as a child, including brushing, flossing and visiting the dentist. These good habits will help keep your mouth and body healthy, especially for those who are more at risk for certain diseases, such as Alzheimer's disease.

Alzheimer's is a degenerative disorder that results in memory loss and is the most common cause of dementia in adults 65 and older.

A recent study suggests a possible association between Alzheimer's and gum disease.¹ Researchers analyzed brain tissue from Alzheimer's patients and found a certain bacteria (*P. gingivalis*) and a toxic enzyme it produces in 96 percent of the cases. The same bacteria increased dental plaque found in Alzheimer's patients.

Researchers found that the bacteria can travel from the mouth to the brain and can destroy brain cells. This suggests a connection between bacteria found in gum disease and the development of Alzheimer's.^{2, 3}

While the study has noteworthy findings, more research is needed. Regardless, the study does reaffirm the important role gum health plays in overall wellness, including how important it is to manage gum disease—especially in older adults and for people with a high risk for dementia.

Speak with your dentist if you or a loved one has an increased risk of Alzheimer's disease, and be sure to keep regularly scheduled dental appointments.



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1 Watts A et al., "Inflammation as a potential mediator for the association between periodontal disease and Alzheimer's disease," *Neuropsychiatr Dis Treat*, (2008), 865-76. 2 Sparks Stein P et al., "Serum antibodies to periodontal pathogens are a risk factor for Alzheimer's disease," *Alzheimer's & Dementia* no. 8, (2012). 3 Abbayya K et al., "Association between periodontitis and Alzheimer's disease," *North American Journal of Medical Science*, (2015), 241-6.