Impacts Beyond the Mouth

Growing evidence connects a healthy mouth with a healthy body. Here are some examples showing why oral health is about much more than a smile:

### High Blood Pressure
- Putting off dental care during early adulthood is linked to an increased risk of having high blood pressure.
- Patients with gum disease are less likely to keep their blood pressure under control with medication than are those with good oral health.

### Diabetes
- Untreated gum disease makes it harder for people with diabetes to manage their blood glucose levels.
- Diabetes raises the risk of developing gum disease by 86%.

### Obesity
- Brushing teeth no more than once per day was linked with the development of obesity.
- Frequent consumption of sugar-sweetened drinks raises the risk of both obesity and tooth decay among children and adults.

### Respiratory Health
- Research shows that improving oral hygiene among medically fragile seniors can reduce the death rate from aspiration pneumonia.
- Patients with ventilator-associated pneumonia (VAP) who engaged in regular toothbrushing spent significantly less time on mechanical ventilation than other VAP patients.
- Improving veterans’ oral hygiene reduced the incidence of hospital-acquired pneumonia (HAP) by 92%, preventing about 136 HAP cases and saving 24 lives.

### Adverse Birth Outcomes
- Gum disease among pregnant women is associated with preterm births, low birthweight babies and preeclampsia, a pregnancy complication that can cause organ damage and can be fatal.

### Dementia
- Having 10 years of chronic gum disease (periodontitis) was associated with a higher risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease.
- Researchers report that uncontrolled periodontal disease “could trigger or exacerbate” the neuroinflammatory phenomenon seen in Alzheimer’s disease.

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### Sources

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