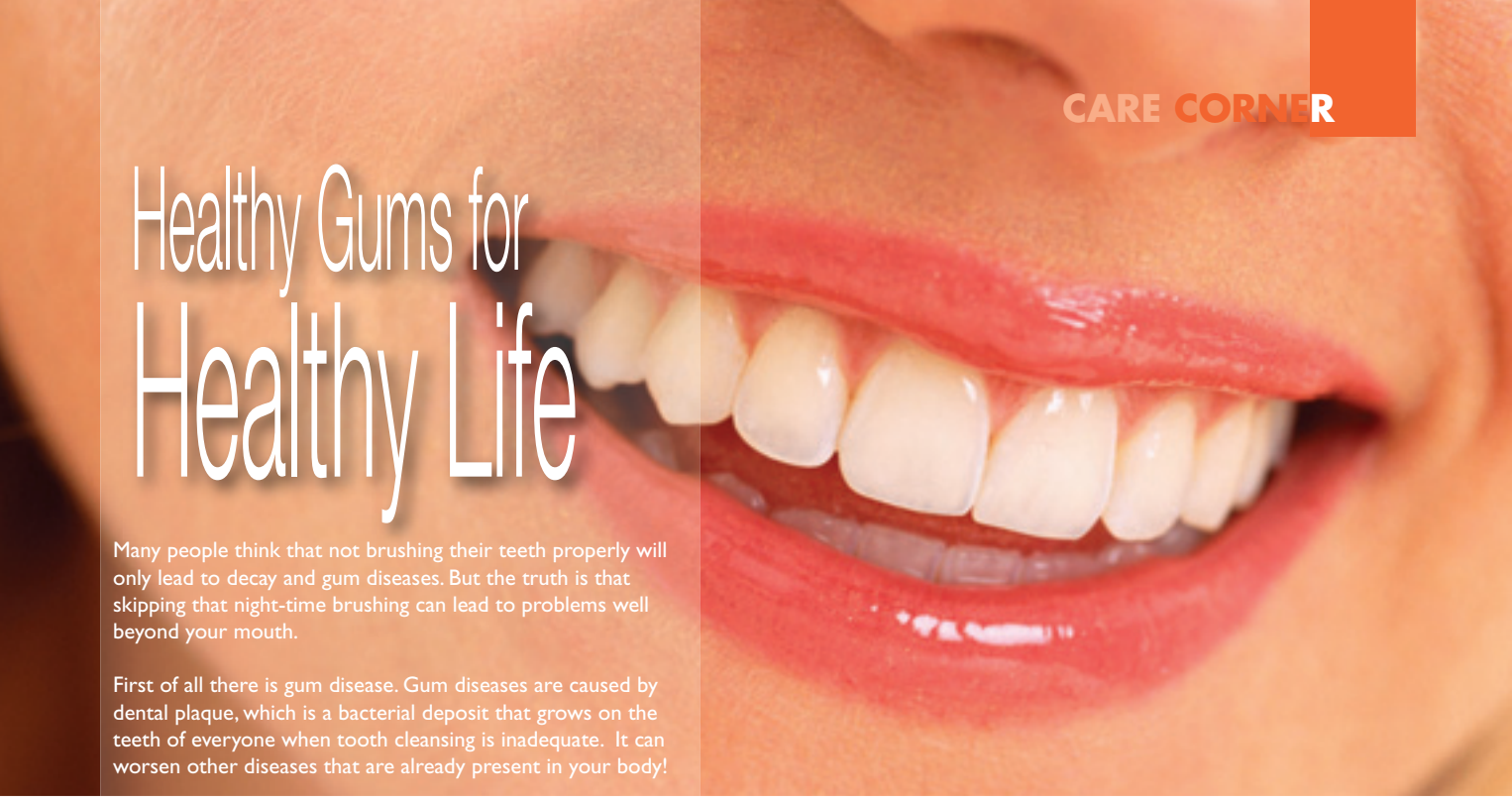
Healthy Gums for Healthy Life



Many people think that not brushing their teeth properly will only lead to decay and gum diseases. But the truth is that skipping that night-time brushing can lead to problems well beyond your mouth.

First of all there is gum disease. Gum diseases are caused by dental plaque, which is a bacterial deposit that grows on the teeth of everyone when tooth cleansing is inadequate. It can worsen other diseases that are already present in your body!

Diseases of the Heart

Many studies have established the fact that patients with gum diseases are at higher risk of recurrence of stroke.

It has also been found that often patients with congenital heart defects of the valve or those who had valvular replacements of the heart require a relatively high dose of antibiotics before dental treatment to prevent occurrence of a heart disease known as infective endocarditis (infection of the inner layers of the heart). This is because bacteria from dental plaque can get into the blood stream via injuries or wounds in the mouth. Then, it can get lodged onto these vulnerable, defective heart valves and cause infection. It is important to be clear about the disease process as infective endocarditis can occur when there is no dental treatment. That is because when a person's oral hygiene is poor, bacteria can enter the blood stream through any open wound or sore in the mouth.

Diabetes

Diabetics have poor immune response to infection. If their blood glucose level is not well controlled, they are more likely to have gum diseases and develop gum abscesses (gum boils). These swelling of the gums can be painful. The presence of the gum disease may affect your body's ability to process and use insulin. This may cause diabetes to be more difficult to control, which in turn results in the gum disease becoming more severe than in a non-diabetic. In other words, a clean, healthy mouth makes it easier to keep the diabetes under control.

Pregnancy

It is of utmost importance that pregnant women visit the dentist for regular dental check-ups as there are several oral diseases that pregnant women are prone to suffer from. In severe cases it may even affect the foetus. These oral diseases include pregnancy gingivitis, and pregnancy epulides, which are swellings of the gum. Researchers have also found that there is a correlation between increasing severity of gum disease and pre-term low birth weight (PLBW) babies. Gum disease is an infection of the gums. As explained in the previous paragraph, it can lead to high levels of bacterial toxins in the blood stream. This can stimulate premature labour.

So, general illnesses of the body could begin in the mouth! And, lack of oral hygiene can make general illnesses worse. It is a two-way relationship. Do visit your dentist to find out more about the connection between your general health and oral hygiene.

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This article is contributed by the Singapore Dental Health Foundation, an organisation of volunteers who work to educate the public on dental health.

www.dentalhealth.org.sg

The focus of this year's Oral Health Campaign is the prevention of gum diseases. The Adult Oral Health Survey 2003 revealed that 30% of the public aged 20 years and above were not aware of gum diseases. And close to 85% of those surveyed had some form of gum disease. If left untreated, gum disease can eventually lead to tooth loss. The main cause of gum disease is poor oral hygiene, which results in build up of plaque around the gums.

As part of the Oral Health Campaign in August 2007, Colgate, Singapore Dental Health Foundation, Singapore Dental Association and the Health Promotion Board will run roadshows in three shopping mall locations. This is an opportunity not to be missed as there will be FREE dental check-ups, dental consultations and FREE Colgate toothpaste samples.

Oral Health Month 2007 Roadshows 10.30 am - 8.30 pm

3 - 5 August	Causeway Point, Woodlands
17 -19 August	HDB Hub, Toa Payoh
24 - 26 August	Bukit Panjang Plaza, Bukit Panjang

Fast Facts >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>

People with type 1 diabetes produce inadequate amounts of insulin, so insulin replacement is their key treatment.