

## I Had No Idea Periodontal Disease Is Linked to...

You may have seen stories in the news about the connection between periodontal disease and heart disease, stroke, and diabetes. However, those aren't the only health conditions that are related to periodontal disease. Research has shown that having periodontal disease can put you at risk for a few surprising conditions including rheumatoid arthritis, certain cancers, and even kidney disease.

### Rheumatoid Arthritis

Over 1.3 million Americans suffer from rheumatoid arthritis (RA), a chronic, inflammatory disease of the joints that can lead to long-term joint damage. A study published in the *Journal of Periodontology* uncovered yet another potential side effect of RA; researchers discovered that patients with RA are eight times more likely to have periodontal disease than those without RA. However, the research indicates that poor oral hygiene alone did not account for the connection between RA and gum disease, which means that other factors play a role as well. Both RA and gum disease are systemic inflammatory disorders which may explain the connection between the two.

### Cancers

Men are especially at risk for developing certain cancers if they have periodontal disease. Research published in *The Lancet Oncology* found that men with a history of

gum disease are 14 percent more likely to develop cancer than men with healthy gums. In fact, researchers discovered that men with periodontal disease are 49 percent more likely to develop kidney cancer, 54 percent more likely to develop pancreatic cancer, and 30 percent more likely to develop blood cancers.

### Kidney Disease

A study published in the *Journal of Periodontology* suggests that toothless adults may be more likely to have chronic kidney disease than adults with all of their teeth. Untreated periodontal disease can lead to bone loss around teeth, which can then cause teeth to loosen and fall out. Periodontal disease is a leading cause of tooth loss in adults. In the study, the lack of teeth was found to be significantly associated with chronic kidney disease. The two diseases may be connected by chronic inflammation, as both are considered inflammatory conditions.

To help protect yourself from these health conditions, including periodontal disease, make sure to brush your teeth twice each day, floss at least once each day, and see a dental professional for cleanings twice each year. If periodontal disease develops, a consultation with a dentist or periodontist may lead to effective treatment. The key to a healthy body may start with a healthy mouth!



### Are you at risk for periodontal disease?

Your risk for periodontal disease may increase depending on:

- Your age
- Gender
- Bleeding gums
- Tobacco use
- Family history of gum disease

To find out if you may be at risk, take the American Academy of Periodontology's risk assessment at <http://perio.org/consumer/4a.html>. The assessment will let you know if you are at low, moderate, or high risk for periodontal disease. Your periodontist will be happy to discuss your results with you.

The American Academy of Periodontology Patient Page is a public service of the AAP and should not be used as a substitute for the care and advice of your personal periodontist. There may be variations in treatment that your periodontist will recommend based on individual facts and circumstances. Visit [perio.org](http://perio.org) to assess your risk and for more information on periodontal disease.