



# TOOTHFULLY SPEAKING!

**DR. PREETY DESAI**

Aging and growing old has nothing to do with losing your teeth - contrary to popular belief! It may have been "common" in our grandparents day to lose your teeth and chalk it up to growing old but this is false and "not normal".

Not one day goes by in my specialty practice where I don't encounter a patient who has gum disease, missing teeth or chronic gum infection. Gum disease is common and affects 87% of humanity in some form. My real job is actually explaining to my patients, what their diagnosis is, how they got to the point they are at and the many options available to solve their problems. The latin translation of "doctor" is actually "teacher" - that is my primary job ... to explain things based on my education and experience thus providing customized individual solutions.

Whether the cause of your problems is from a lack of care as a child or fear of dental treatment or a family history of dental disease or all the above - today's dentistry with all its tools, technology and equipment but mostly research and education has been able to help people understand their oral health and take control and with a periodontist's guidance achieve excellent longevity of all their teeth!

What is not communicated today is the role that periodontal disease has on the rest of the body through the effects of the 900+ bacteria in the mouth and the damage they have on the other body systems or by direct attachment to vital organs such as the heart, colon, brain etc. People of course know that their mouths are wholly responsible for nutrition, communicating our smiles and emotions but more importantly allowing us to verbalize our intellect and intelligence.

When the mouth is unhealthy or has "dis-ease", then it conversely affects the rest of the body adversely:

- a) "Circulation" reported that, "Older adults have a higher proportion of four periodontal-disease-causing bacteria inhabiting their mouths also tend to have thicker carotid arteries, a strong predictor of stroke and heart attack."
- b) A recent study published in the "Journal of Alzheimer's Disease" has linked gum disease with Alzheimer's through the presence of certain periodontal bacteria in the brains of deceased Alzheimer's patients.
- c) A 2011 Yale University report suggested that "changes in oral bacteria play a role in the risk for developing pneumonia."
- d) Scientists at the University of Louisiana, School of Dentistry report that they have discovered how the periodontal bacteria worsens rheumatoid arthritis
- e) Case Western Reserve University School of Dental Medicine, researchers found that fusobacteria have a specific sticky molecule which attaches to and invades human colorectal cancer cells

In periodontal disease, the gum pocket is an ulcerated lesion resulting from the breakdown of normal tissue defenses. This process, allows bacteria and their products to enter directly into the bloodstream. It's analogous to having an open wound that's infected. The surfaces of all teeth gum pockets can be as large as a softball! If you had an infection the size of a softball anywhere else in the body - you would deal with it immediately! Why ignore the mouth? Because it is painless!

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