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Oral Health Booklet

A collection of our top oral health tips in a printer-friendly file.

Preventing gum disease may help avoid Alzheimer's

People may be able to avoid — or at the very least, delay — Alzheimer's by avoiding [gum \(periodontal\) disease](#), among other healthy lifestyle measures such as increasing exercise and drinking fruit and vegetable juice.

According to a recent Washington Post article, new research suggests that even though family history may predispose a person to developing Alzheimer's, various behaviors — if started early enough in life — may help delay the onset of the disease. It is best to begin introducing healthy habits early in life, researchers say, although studies have shown that even middle-aged people can benefit from the lifestyle changes.

Nearly 5 million Americans have Alzheimer's, and with the vanguard of the baby boom generation turning 60 this year, the number of cases is expected to increase 70 percent by 2020.

The research was compiled from three different studies. One study of middle-aged children of Alzheimer's parents looked at healthy lifestyle factors as a way to delay the onset of the disease. A second study of Japanese Americans showed that people were much less at risk for developing Alzheimer's after drinking fruit juice three times a week.

The third study followed 109 pairs of identical twins in Sweden to find any lifestyle factors associated with developing dementia. This study found that twins who had periodontal disease earlier in life were four times more likely to develop Alzheimer's. Researchers believe gum disease is a sign of inflammation, which may play a role in the destruction of brain cells.

Regular dentist visits are important for prevention of gum disease. Your dentist can remove tartar, which is plaque buildup that can irritate the gums and lead to tooth loss. Dentists also can detect early signs of gum disease. However, prevention begins at home. Brushing and flossing twice daily, eating right and avoiding tobacco will help prevent gum disease.

Additional resources:

- [Don't give in to gum disease](#)
- [Brushing and flossing techniques](#)
- [What to eat to keep your teeth](#)
- [Smoking and gum disease](#)



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