



HealthyPeople·Dental

WOMEN'S ORAL HEALTH · AND OVERALL HEALTH

The Surgeon General's Report on Oral Health states that **good oral health is essential to good general health**. And specifically for women, a growing body of research has linked gum disease to a variety of health problems that affect women. Because **gum disease is a bacterial infection**, it can enter the bloodstream and may be a factor in causing other health complications:

- **HEART DISEASE**— People with gum disease may be **more at risk for heart disease** and have nearly twice the risk of having a fatal heart attack. Heart disease is also the number one killer of American women.
- **STROKE**—One study found a casual relationship of oral infections as a **risk factor for stroke**.
- **DIABETES**—People with diabetes are **more likely to have gum disease** and may make it more **difficult for diabetics to control their blood sugar**. Gum disease may also be a risk factor for diabetes, even in otherwise healthy individuals.
- **RESPIRATORY PROBLEMS**—Bacteria that grow in the oral cavity **can travel to the lungs** causing respiratory disease such as **pneumonia** - especially in people with gum disease.
- **PREGNANCY OUTCOMES**—Pregnant women who have gum disease may be more likely to have a **baby born too early or too small**. Gum disease may also trigger increased levels of biological fluids that **induce labor**.

Because gum disease is usually painless, many women may not even realize they have it until it reaches an advanced state. Your best defense is to **brush and floss daily and see your dentist regularly**.



HOW WOMEN'S ORAL HEALTH NEEDS CHANGE OVER TIME

Women have special oral health requirements during the unique phases in their lives. Changes in female hormone levels during puberty, menstruation, pregnancy, and menopause exaggerate the way gums react to plaque.



So at these times, women need to be especially thorough when **brushing and flossing everyday to prevent gum disease**.

Source: mouthhealthy.org

MENSTRUATION—some women find that their **gums swell and bleed prior to their periods**, while others experience cold sores or canker sores. These symptoms usually go away once your period starts.

ORAL CONTRACEPTIVES—**inflamed gums** are one of the most common side effects.

MENOPAUSE—oral symptoms experienced during this stage of a woman's life include **red or inflamed gums, oral pain and discomfort, burning sensations, altered taste sensations, and dry mouth**.

PREGNANCY—studies show many pregnant women experience **pregnancy gingivitis**, when dental plaque builds up on the teeth and irritates the gums. Symptoms include **red, inflamed and bleeding gums**. Prenatal care is especially important.

OSTEOPOROSIS—a number of studies have suggested a **link between osteoporosis and bone loss in the jaw**. This may lead to tooth loss because the density of the bone that supports teeth may be decreased. Combined with gum disease, osteoporosis speeds up the process of bone loss around the teeth.