

The Oral-Body Health Connection (p.22)

Exploring The Relationship Between Healthy Teeth And Total Body Wellness

By Dr. Edmond Suh

Many people do not realize that establishing excellent dental hygiene habits can go far toward improving your current state of well-being. Keeping your body healthy does not stop at eating the right foods or hitting the gym. Regular dental checkups and daily care of your teeth and gums are essential to preventing a whole host of issues related to your physical health. Keeping your mouth healthy has been shown to reduce your risk of migraines, muscle soreness, back pain, sleep apnea, and even cardiovascular disease. Understanding the vital link between poor oral health and other illnesses can help you live a healthier, happier life.

GUM DISEASE ... WIDESPREAD AND DANGEROUS

A very common progressive disorder, periodontal disease - also known as gum disease - is triggered by preventable factors such as plaque buildup, tobacco use, certain medications, and stress. Recent studies show that untreated periodontal disease causes deterioration to your overall oral health. If you have periodontal disease, you are not alone. This condition affects 75% of adults over 35 years of age and is responsible for approximately 70% of all adult tooth loss.

Symptoms include:

- Red, swollen, tender, or bleeding gums;
- Gum recession, or gums pulling away from teeth;
- Loose or separating teeth;
- Persistent bad breath (halitosis).

MIGRAINE HEADACHES ... A SURPRISING SOLUTION TO PAIN

Many people who suffer from migraine headaches are actually suffering from Temporomandibular Disorder, or TMD. The temporomandibular joints are the small joints that hold the jaw and skull together. TMD results when these joints are not properly aligned. Muscles and nerves around the joints can become irritated trying to compensate for misalignment, causing mild to severe pain. Symptoms associated with TMD include:

- Grinding, clenching, and uneven wear of teeth;
- Popping or clicking jaw joints;
- Inability to fully close or open the mouth;
- Pain in the head, neck, jaw, face, shoulders, or back;
- Chronic migraines or headaches, earaches, or ringing ears.

SNORING ... HOW PROPER SLEEP KEEPS YOU HEALTHY

Snoring is the result of a person's tongue falling back and partially blocking the airway during sleep, or the throat tissue collapsing into the airway. Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA) is a dangerous sleep disorder that is sometimes caused by severe snoring. A person suffering from OSA may experience the following symptoms:

- Daytime fatigue;
- Decreased concentration;
- General feeling of poor health;
- Waking up to gasp for air or gagging.

Many health risks are associated with OSA because the heart and brain are not receiving a sufficient amount of oxygen. Some reported health problems that have been linked to untreated OSA include diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, increased stroke risk, gastroesophageal reflux (GERD), morning headaches, impaired concentration, and depression.

IMPROVE TOTAL BODY WELLNESS

New technologies in the dental industry not only alleviate pain in the mouth, but pain in the entire body. In addition, advancements in dentistry allow for a comfortable and relaxing dental experience. Today's professionals use the latest technology to help avoid society's misconceived fear of the dentist experience.

To treat gum disease, there are customized, non-surgical periodontal therapies which includes:

- Antimicrobial therapy;
- Charting and diagnostic services;
- Counseling and education for prevention of gum disease recurrence;
- Non-surgical gum disease therapy (scaling, root planning, antibiotic therapy);
- Laser therapy for debridement and surgical gum procedures.

Correcting TMD and related migraine/body aches is accomplished by using neuromuscular dentistry. Neuromuscular dentistry addresses the relationship of relaxed jaw muscles to the head, neck, and body posture. K7 equipment, which combines innovative computer technology and advanced programs to record optimal jaw position, is key to eliminating TMD. This sophisticated technology allows a trained neuromuscular dentist to efficiently measure and record jaw function and jaw muscle activity. The pain associated with TMD is alleviated when the most natural, and comfortable, jaw position and bite alignments are set.

To treat sleep apnea, a popular choice is the SomnoMed MAS oral appliance. Studies prove SomnoMed MAS is one of the most effective oral appliance treatments for sleep apnea. This custom-fit appliance is similar to an orthodontic retainer, and is worn during sleep. Although it fits like a mouth guard, SomnoMed MAS is a precision instrument, clinically tested to perfectly position your lower jaw slightly forward. This will prevent tissue at the back of the throat from collapsing, thereby significantly reducing heavy snoring, choking, and sleep disruption. For many wearers, it is significantly more comfortable than a CPAP machine.

For more information about how oral health is related to total body wellness, ask your dentist for a complimentary consult. And remember - a healthy smile leads to a healthy person!

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