
Study Links Gum Disease to Cancer – How to Prevent Both

Dr. Tim Johnson Explains the New Study and Offers Tips on Prevention and Treatment

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A new study linking gum disease to pancreatic cancer is a sober reminder that what goes on the mouth can affect the rest of the body.

The new findings come out of an ongoing study of 51,000 male health professionals in the United States.

When researchers looked at data collected between 1986 and 2002, they found that men with gum disease had a 63 percent higher chance of getting pancreatic cancer, even if they'd never smoked.

ABC News medical contributor Dr. Tim Johnson visited "Good Morning America" to explain the study and offer advice on how people can keep their gums healthy.

He said scientists didn't yet know why gum disease and cancer were linked, but he laid out some theories.

"Gum disease can increase inflammation that can be spread throughout the body, but the honest answer is we don't know," he said.

Gum disease can be linked to other diseases as well, including heart disease, stroke, diabetes, respiratory issues and lung infections.

"That's why we have to think of it not just as a mouth problem but [a] bodywide problem," Johnson said.

Johnson offered tips on what everyone could do to ensure the health of their gums.

- **Brush and Clean Properly**

It's not necessary to use a special toothpaste; just brush and clean your teeth well. Water Piks help because the jet stream can get into places even floss can't reach. Even if you do all of these things faithfully, you'll need a professional cleaning a few times a year -- it's preventive money well spent. Many people develop significant plaque, and brushing and flossing alone can't always get rid of it.

- **Symptoms of Gum Disease**

The symptoms of gum disease include sore gums, tender gums or bleeding gums when you brush or floss. If you see blood on your toothbrush or floss, don't ignore it.

- **Treatment of Gum Disease**

Those with gum disease must start a regimen of thorough cleaning with anesthesia, if necessary. Antibiotics can control a severe case. Even if you start flossing and see a reduction in the amount of bleeding, that doesn't mean it's cured. Gum disease is something that stays with you. It's a matter of constant control.

- For more information, visit the [American Academy of Periodontology Web site.](#)

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