

The background features a silhouette of a person with their hands on their hips. A heart is positioned on the person's chest, with a white heart rate line extending from it across the top of the image. To the left, a close-up of a toothbrush head is visible. The overall color scheme is a gradient of orange and yellow.

Your mouth is talking. *Are you listening?*

# Yeah, yeah

you know the drill. Brush. Floss. Checkups. But do you? Only half of Missourians see their dentist twice a year. HELLO! Gum disease may be linked to heart disease, among other problems. So call that dentist. And let's floss tonight. YOUR MOUTH

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## Oral Health for Adults

If your mouth could talk, it would have a lot to say. For example, it might remind you that your mouth is connected to your body and that preventable problems such as tooth decay and gum disease may be linked to other serious health issues. And, while they often go together, decay is not a sign of gum disease – someone can have gum disease and yet no cavities. The Missouri Dental Association (MDA) offers the following tips to help improve your relationship with your mouth.

- **GUM DISEASE** Recent studies indicate there may be a link between gum disease and heart disease. For example, some research suggests that bacteria from the mouth can enter the bloodstream and increase the risk for heart disease. Mild forms of gum disease affect about 75 percent of adults. Common signs are red and irritated gums or gums that bleed easily. Visit your dentist twice a year for maintenance, and brush and floss twice a day to avoid plaque buildup.

- **TOOTH DECAY** Tooth decay goes untreated in about one-third of all adults in the U.S., yet it can be easily prevented. Obvious decay usually appears as brown or black spots on the teeth, but white, chalky lines along the gum line also are an indicator. To help prevent decay, eat a balanced diet and limit sugary foods to mealtimes. Try not to sip on sugary beverages such as sweet tea, sports drinks and soda all day.

- **ORAL CANCER** More than 30,000 new cases of cancer in the oral cavity and surrounding area are diagnosed annually. Between 65 and 75 percent of those are detected during dental exams. To help prevent oral cancer, limit the use of tobacco and alcohol.

- **TEETH WHITENING** Because teeth whitening can affect your oral health, the MDA recommends consulting with your dentist before using any whitening product. Dentists can properly identify the cause of discoloration, which can result from a number of factors. This can save patients time and money and ensure a more predictable outcome without the possible adverse side effects sometimes associated with whitening, such as irritation or damage to the gums and teeth.

### TIME TO QUIT?

Smokers are more likely than nonsmokers to have the following oral health problems:

- *Plaque that hardens on your teeth and only can be removed during a professional cleaning*
- *Deep pockets between your teeth and gums that can hold bad bacteria*
- *Loss of the bone and tissue that support your teeth*

### SOURCES

The American Dental Association, American Academy of Periodontology, Centers for Disease Control

Brush, floss and visit your MDA dentist.

For more on what your mouth is trying to tell you, visit [YourMouthIsTalking.org](http://YourMouthIsTalking.org).