

February 2023

Oral Wellness Newsletter



This February, show a little love to your gums

February may be for lovers, but it's also the perfect time to show your gums some love! In recognition of Gum Disease Awareness Month and American Heart Month, learn more about how taking care of your gums can lead to better heart, mind and overall health.

Research has found a possible association between gum disease, heart disease and Alzheimer's and various forms of dementia. Our Chief Dental Officer Roosevelt Allen, DDS, MAGD, ABGD, wrote about the connection between the mouth and mind in an opinion editorial (op-ed) published a few months ago; now, recent news articles from *Best Life* and *Dr.Bicuspid.com* are addressing the same possible association.

Gum disease is an infection of the tissue surrounding the teeth, caused by plaque buildup. If left untreated, bacteria can travel throughout the body, including to places in your brain and heart valves. Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States, and research shows that people with gum disease are two to three times more likely to have a heart attack^[1]. During American Heart Month, remember that routine check-ups with a dentist and practicing good and consistent oral hygiene may reduce your risk of heart disease.

Read Dr. Allen's [op-ed](#) to learn more about the mouth – body connection.



Smile, it's National Children's Dental Health Month

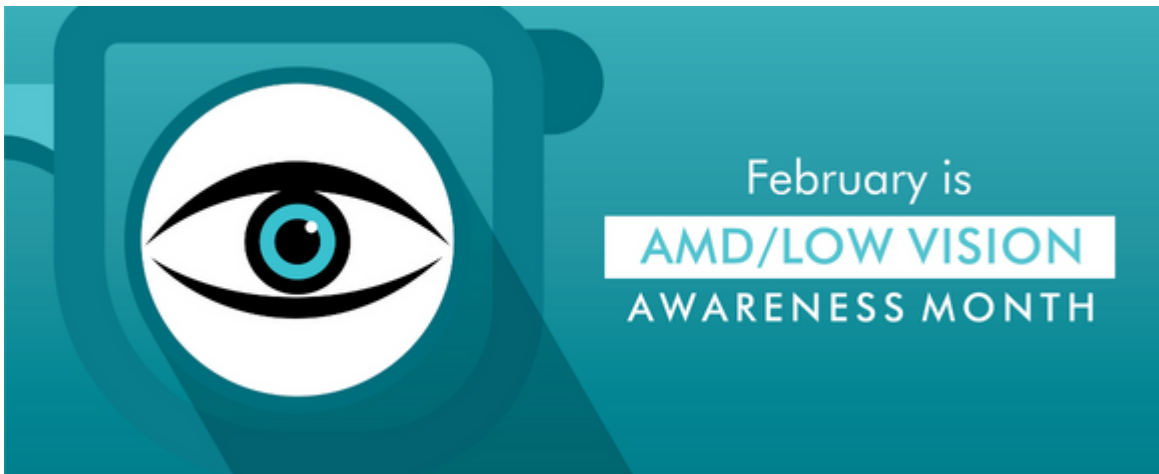
Brush up on oral health tips for the children in your life and learn how establishing a good dental routine at a young age can help prevent future health issues.

Children's oral health is an important part of overall health and well-being. Baby teeth lay the foundation for adult teeth and their development may affect the relationship between a child's physical, mental and emotional health. There are several conditions and diseases impacting children that are linked to poor oral health, including:

- **Tooth decay.** One of the most chronic and preventable childhood diseases in the United States, this condition results from the accumulation of plaque and bacteria in the mouth. If left untreated, it can cause cavities in baby teeth and lead to oral infections that can spread to new adult teeth.
- **Speech impairment.** Teeth have the ability to impact how children articulate words, produce sounds and can have a lasting effect on a child's ability to talk. Early tooth loss caused by advanced tooth decay may lead to delayed speech development.
- **Decline in educational performance and difficulty sleeping.** Chronic tooth pain associated with poor oral health can lead to trouble focusing in learning environments, increased absences from school and difficulty completing assignments on time. Additionally, infants and children with chronic dental pain may also have difficulty falling asleep or sleeping through the night, which could also impact their performance in school.
- **Reduced self-esteem.** Children struggling with oral diseases may be reluctant to smile, given the appearance of their mouth or missing teeth.
- **Digestive issues.** Poor oral health may result in difficulty chewing and swallowing, which can affect a child's digestive system. As a result, they may experience discomfort, indigestion and gastrointestinal issues.

With the right preventive oral care, including routine dental checkups, you can help your child avoid these issues and get a jump start on a lifetime of healthy teeth and gums!

Take a look at our [Children's Dental Timeline](#) to help you establish a good oral hygiene routine for your child.



Early detection can save your vision from Age-Related Macular Degeneration

Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD), an eye disease that blurs your central vision, is the leading cause of blindness in older Americans. Your risk for developing AMD increases if you are over the age of 55, have a family history of the disease, are Caucasian or smoke. New treatments have dramatically changed the course of this disease over the last 10 years, but early detection is a critical first step for effective treatment. Because AMD does not show early symptoms, a dilated eye exam conducted by an optometrist is needed to catch it early.

Don't put off going to the eye doctor. Talk with your employer to see what vision options are available to you. Regular check-ups can help keep your vision healthy and may reveal other underlying health issues.

[Listen](#) to these eye doctors' stories of how diabetes, cancer, multiple sclerosis, concussions and other systemic diseases can be detected through a routine eye exam.

Sources:

1. Gum disease and heart disease: The common thread; Harvard Health; 2021.

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