HEALTHY GUMS MAY lead to a healthier you

Regular visits to the dentist may do more than brighten your smile.

Gum disease, also called periodontal disease, is a bacterial infection of the gums and the bone around your teeth. It's caused by bacteria that can live on your teeth and in the spaces between your teeth and gums. Research shows a possible association between gum disease and complications for heart disease, stroke, diabetes, preterm birth and other health issues. Healthy gums support healthy teeth. And if you are diagnosed with gum disease, it's important to complete the periodontal treatment plan recommended by your dentist.

Healthy gums may mean a healthier heart

Researchers have found that people with gum disease are almost twice as likely to suffer from coronary artery disease.[1] Bacteria and their byproducts from the gum tissues may enter the blood stream, causing small blood clots that may contribute to the clogging of arteries. Clots in the coronary arteries can lead to heart attacks. A blood clot in the brain can cause a stroke. Bottom line: care for your gums, and they may help guard your heart!

Healthy gums may help control blood sugar

Those with diabetes are more likely to have gum disease than people without diabetes.[2] Why? Because diabetics are more at risk of getting infections.[2] And research shows the relationship between gum disease and diabetes is a two-way street – gum disease can actually make it harder for people who have diabetes to control their blood sugar.[2] Good dental health may be linked to a reduced risk of diabetic complications!

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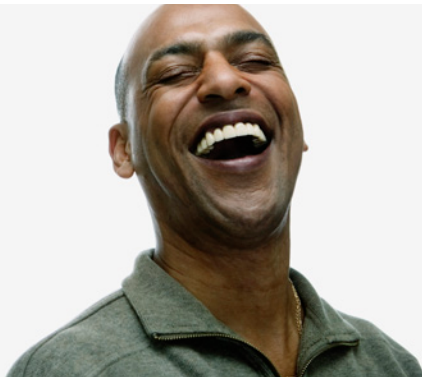
Healthy gums may help reduce the risk of preterm birth

Mom's gum disease may increase the chances of a preterm, low birth weight baby. The changing hormone levels in some pregnant women can make dental problems worse.[3] That's why it's important that pregnant women take special care to properly brush at least twice a day with a soft-bristled toothbrush, floss daily and get regular dental checkups.[3] This possible link between gum disease and preterm birth is another reason to protect your dental health!

1. American Academy of Periodontology. (2012, April 18).*Gum disease links to heart disease and stroke*. Retrieved from http://www.perio.org/consumer/mbc.heart.htm
2. American Academy of Periodontology. (2012, April 18).*Gum disease and diabetes*. Retrieved from http://www.perio.org/consumer/mbc.diabetes.htm
3. American Dental Association. (2012). *Pregnancy*. Retrieved from http://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/pregnancy/

Gum disease is preventable and treatable. Be sure to visit your dentist on a regular basis.

Are you at risk for gum disease?
Take Cigna's periodontal (gum) disease risk assessment quiz today in English or Spanish at **Cigna.com** or **myCigna.com** if you're a current Cigna customer. You can print your results and share them with your dentist at your next visit.



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