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7 Gross Things That Happen When You Don't Brush Or Floss Your Teeth

By Miki Hayes | April 29, 2016



Most of us have probably grown up hearing all about the importance of brushing and flossing our teeth on a regular basis. But what can actually happen if we don't? Turns out there are plenty of gross things that happen when you don't brush or floss. So I spoke with a few dentists to find out exactly what those things are. NYC-based cosmetic dentist, Dr. Gregg Lituchy; celebrity dentist, [Dr. Bill Dorfman](#); and Dental Director of Boston Dental, Dr. Maged Malecki; all weighed in on what we should be doing to keep our pearly whites, well, pearly white.

While the jury's still out on how many times per day exactly you should be brushing and flossing, all agreed that, for good dental hygiene, flossing is a necessary addition to brushing, and you should be doing both *at least* once per day. And sure, missing a day once in a while probably won't immediately lead to any of these gross consequences. But skipping too many cleanings could be more dangerous than you might think. So to make sure your teeth stay white in addition to staying in your mouth, here are seven reasons that'll help you remember to brush and floss on a regular basis.

1. Bad Breath



Let's start slow, because this is going to get real, fast. All three dentists were quick to point out the issue of bad breath, so you know it's serious. If you think it's only up to onions, garlic, and coffee, think again. Dr. Malecki stated that "poor oral hygiene is a major cause of halitosis." And Dr. Dorfman explained, "bacteria thrive in warm, dark, [and] moist places. So if you don't remove the bacteria from your mouth it will continue to grow." Yeesh, no thanks.

2. Yellow Teeth



Unsightly staining and yellow teeth are also not completely up to the beverages we consume (looking at you, wine and coffee). All the doctors agreed: Poor oral hygiene can lead to the buildup of debris and bacteria, which will make teeth appear less than their best.

3. Gingivitis



Another unanimous topic of conversation was gingivitis. When you're brushing, make sure to show your gums some love, as improper care can lead to gums that are inflamed, red, and bleed more easily.

4. Periodontitis



Periodontitis is a serious gum infection that happens when gingivitis goes too long untreated. While it is characterized by more serious inflammation, redness, and bleeding of the gums, Dr. Lituchy let me know that if periodontitis is left untreated, it could actually lead to bone loss around the teeth, and even tooth loss.

5. Tooth Decay



Dr. Dorfman explained the behind-the-scenes of what leads to needing a root canal, and it's not pretty. Basically, if teeth are left uncleaned, bacteria builds up. The bacteria feed on sugar in your system and consequently produce lactic acid. The lactic acid will then eat into the enamel, eventually causing the tooth to die, and a root canal to be necessary. I don't know about you, but that doesn't sound like fun to me.

6. Tooth Loss



If things get really bad though, you could even lose your teeth. As Dr. Lituchy and Dr. Malecki warned, letting periodontitis go too long without being treated could result in bone loss around the teeth. And this bone loss leads to tooth loss. But wait! It gets worse!

7. Coronary Artery Disease



As if other oral problems aren't enough, poor dental hygiene could lead to even bigger issues. Dr. Lituchy explained that results from a recent study show that "95 percent of dentists believe that there is an association between inflammation in the mouth and inflammatory processes in the rest of our body." This is because, if the bacteria and plaque in our mouths is not removed by brushing and flossing, it could actually "enter tiny blood vessels in gum tissue and travel to other parts of the body." Which means you could potentially lower your risk of heart disease by taking care of your teeth.

And really, there could be worse things than having to brush and floss to stay physically healthy.

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