

HEALTH

7 Things Your Mouth Can Tell You About Your Overall Health

By Carina Wolff | August 25, 2016



Most of us go to the dentist for a teeth-cleaning or to check for cavities, but other than that, we don't pay much attention to what's going on in our mouths. However, good oral health is important for more than just a beautiful smile, and issues in your mouth can actually indicate more serious health problems.

"Your mouth really is the gateway to your entire body," says [Dr. Bill Dorfman, DDS](#). "Pay attention to the early warning signs, as it could be an indication of something more serious."

To keep an eye on your overall well-being, you should pay attention to these seven things your mouth can tell you about your overall health.

1. Tooth Decay

"If you have always been the one who used to brag about being cavity-free, but are all of the sudden sitting in the dentist's chair having fillings placed, you could have diabetes," Dorfman says. "Tooth decay could be your body's way of telling you that you have a problem processing glucose. Excess sugar in your saliva can encourage bacteria that can cause dental cavities."

2. Tooth Wear

Worn-down teeth could be a sign of a bigger problem, such as gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD). "When your stomach acid hits your mouth, it could start wearing away the protective enamel on your teeth," Dorfman says. "You may not notice it, but your dentist will."

3. Bleeding Gums

“If your gums are red and bleed when you brush, you may have gum disease,” warns Dr. Kyle Stanley, DDS. “Periodontal disease, or gum disease, happens when there is build-up of bacteria around the teeth. This bacteria can turn into calcified plaque, and this can cause the gums and bone to be infected.” Don’t leave this ignored; gum disease is the number one cause of tooth loss.

4. Bad Breath

“Although bad breath is usually linked to poor oral hygiene, it can also be an indication of certain types of cancer including lung, throat, and stomach cancer,” according to Dorfman. “Acidic or fruity breath, although not as nasty as some types of halitosis, could be a sign that you have diabetes. If your friends and family are complaining about your fish breath, it could mean liver failure.”

5. Dry Mouth

Certain medications can cause dry mouth, but it could also be a symptom of something more serious. “If you are constantly thirsty, schedule an appointment with your doctor, as it could be an early warning sign of diabetes,” Dorfman warns. Dry mouth can also be a sign of an autoimmune disorder.

6. White-Coated Tongue

If your tongue is white and coated, it could be a sign of a fungal disease. “Oral thrush, or Candidiasis, is an oral fungal infection that shows up with white cheesy appearance,” Dr. Stanley says. “This happens when the normal amount of yeast in your mouth gets out of hand and starts to grow too much.” The good news is that this can be easily cured by your dentist.

7. Ground-Down Teeth

“If your teeth are flat and ground down or your jaw is sore in the morning, you may be grinding your teeth at night,” says Stanley. “Many patients grind their teeth involuntarily due to stress or unknown causes. This can have very detrimental effects on your muscles, teeth and gums. A dentist can help diagnose whether you are grinding by feeling the muscles around your face and head and looking at the wear patterns on your teeth.”

If you are concerned about your oral or overall health, the best thing to do is to schedule an appointment with your dentist or doctor (or both).

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