



With gum disease becoming more common, it is important to understand the effects it can have on your chronic illness. Recent studies have proven that gum disease impacts those who suffer from Lupus.

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YOUR Oral Health AND LUPUS



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How do my oral health and Lupus affect each other?

Lupus is a very serious disease and requires special treatment for those who may suffer from the chronic illness. If you have Lupus, then it is important to understand the direct impact your dental health has on this disease. It is equally important to know that certain types of medications prescribed to treat Lupus can make it much easier to obtain certain gum diseases.

Although oral health has not been proven to cause Lupus, studies show that people who are diagnosed with Lupus are at greater risk of developing oral sores, infection, and gum disease.¹ Lupus is more common amongst females however; this disease may be found in males as well. Research has also shown that your body's ability to fight off infection within your gums is weakened with the presence of Lupus.¹ It is important to note that prescription medications associated with Lupus may increase your risk of developing oral sores, infection, and Gingival Hyperplasia, an enlargement of the gums that can become very painful if left untreated.² A great way to lower your risk of these complications is by maintaining good oral health and meeting with your dentist at least twice a year.

What is good oral health?

■ The first key to good oral health is to brush your teeth as often as your dentist recommends. Most people brush at least twice a day. Also, check with your dentist and see if there's a right toothbrush for you—dentists often suggest a soft-bristled brush.

Knowing how to brush your teeth is important! Be sure to reach all the grooves between your teeth and gums, rather than just apply more pressure. To best reach the outsides and insides of your teeth, hold your toothbrush at a 45-degree angle to your gums and use short circular motions. Hold the brush vertically to reach the backs of upper and lower front teeth. Use a back-and-forth motion to clean the crevices on the chewing surfaces of your teeth.

Removing food debris from your teeth ensures that sugar and acids won't wear down the enamel on your teeth, which leads to tooth decay. Don't forget to brush your tongue and the inside of your cheeks—both have pores where bacteria hide.

■ Second, use dental floss or an interdental cleaner every day. Flossing removes tooth-decay causing plaque from places that your toothbrush can't reach. It also removes food debris that, if left between your teeth, causes bad breath and leads to gum disease. Be sure to rinse your mouth when you're finished flossing. Antibacterial mouthwashes may also help. Also, be sure to see your dentist twice a year to maintain a healthy smile.



■ Finally, a nutritious diet can lead to good oral and overall health. Sweets, soft drinks and other unhealthy foods can lead to tooth decay when bacteria in the mouth mix with the sugars in these foods and produce acids that attack the teeth.

Brush after meals and limit snacking to minimize risk. Drinking water throughout the day also helps rinse the mouth and neutralizes acids. It will also help to fight off a dry mouth associated with prescription drugs.



Maintaining good oral health also requires professional care. Visit your dentist regularly for professional cleanings and oral exams and inform your dentist immediately if you experience any of the following conditions:

- touching of the gums becomes painful
- bleeding while brushing or flossing
- gums that become firm
- red, white or swollen areas in any part of your mouth
- swollen gums

Alert your dentist if you are currently taking medications prescribed to treat Lupus, receiving chemotherapy or taking medications for any other chronic medical condition, or if there has been any change in your health. Your dentist can help you manage oral conditions that may result from your medical condition.

Educating yourself on these and other important oral health topics will help you maintain a healthy smile and maintain a healthier lifestyle!

1. Center for Disease Control and Prevention, "Systematic Lupus Erythematosus", 2015.
2. Paul Freedman, DDS, Hospital for Special Surgery, "Oral Concerns in People With Lupus, 2014.