



Bite

Word of mouth

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Featured

Can healthy gums keep your brain sharp?

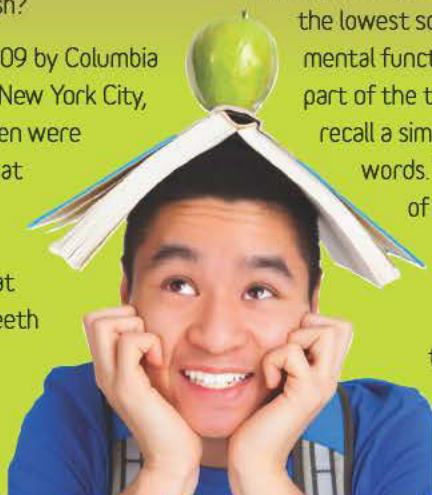
One thing we all dread about growing older is losing our memories. 'Dementia' is the overall term for various types of cognitive impairment related to aging, including Alzheimer's disease. While there's no known cure at this time, research is underway in many areas of medicine, looking for connections, causes and possible preventative measures. It's actually the topic I did my BSc honours thesis on back in 1999.

One intriguing factor that seems to be coming up more and more is the link between oral health and dementia. Studies have shown a link between periodontal, or gum disease, and dementia. Could it be that prevention of this tragic disability is as close at hand as your toothbrush?

In a study published in 2009 by Columbia University researchers in New York City, over 2,300 men and women were tested for the bacteria that cause periodontitis. This infection can cause gums to become so irritated that they no longer hold the teeth firmly in place, causing wobbly teeth and tooth loss. The study subjects,

who were all over age 60, were also given a series of tests challenging their memory functions.

Nearly 20 percent of the subjects had difficulty completing the tests, and those with the poorest dental health had the lowest scores for memory and mental function. For example, one part of the test asked subjects to recall a simple sequence of three words. The higher their level of disease-producing oral bacteria, the poorer the subjects performed on this test. Those with the highest levels of gum disease were



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This month...

It's been a busy month of birthdays at Bite with the studio itself turning two!

In between the cake and cheers we've still made time to bring you a great tip on flossing and its relationship to longevity, and with those extra years on your hands you'll want to make sure that your mind stays sharp well into your golden years—our feature article on the link between gum health and dementia is sure to give you a few healthy pointers that you can put into practise now.

Dr Simon Franks



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three times as likely to have trouble with word recall than those with the healthiest mouths and gums. This group was also twice as likely to fail another test based on simple mental arithmetic calculations.

A Triangle of Diseases

These and other studies are continuing to provide evidence of links between periodontal disease, dementia and cardiovascular disease—which is a leading cause of death among adults worldwide. The common denominator among all of these diseases is inflammation. This is a normal bodily response to injury and is a vital part of our evolution and survival. However, it's when inflammation becomes chronic or 'hidden' deep within the body that things go wrong.

Thus, it's the presence of inflammation in the gums—periodontal disease—that may be an early indication of later troubles with cognitive function. Studies have

shown that people with early periodontal disease, before age 35, have more than four times the chance of developing dementia in later years. Scientists theorize that inflammation, once started in the gums, can 'migrate' or send signals to other parts of the body where it then causes more trouble. If the inflammation spreads to the brain, it shows up as dementia, to the heart, it becomes cardiovascular (heart) disease.

A further intriguing link among these 'gang of three' diseases is that studies are showing they all respond positively to nutritional enhancement. Both Folic acid, a type of B vitamin, and Vitamin D have been shown to lessen the occurrence or severity of dementia, periodontal and cardiovascular disease.

This is not to say you should go out and empty the pharmacies of their vitamin supply—but if you are concerned about your long-term heart and brain health, it seems like it might be good idea to brush your teeth and take your vitamins!



News

Happy Birthday



Issy, Jenna and Cassandra all celebrated this month and Bite turned 2 on the 28th June—its been an amazing journey—thanks to you all for your support.

Handy hint

Flossing for longevity

“I recently went to a conference where an interesting statistic was thrown up on the screen. Flossing adds around six years to your life!

So next time your at the mirror struggling to fit your fists in your mouth remember your not just looking after your teeth and gums but you could also be adding a few more dementia free years on this mortal coil.”



Community

Diabetes check

Last month I presented to the doctors at the Mater Hospital Diabetes Clinic highlighting the links between periodontal disease and Diabetes. An interesting day where we all learnt much.

We're now working together to introduce a diabetes check as part of our periodontal disease risk assessment, and hopefully, with the increased awareness amongst doctors we can save a few more smiles.

Visit the Bite Dental website to receive our email newsletter which includes regular health tips plus exclusive savings and offers from Bite Dental and our community.

Bitedental.com.au

Celebrate everyday heros. Let us know if you have a cause you'd like us to shout about.

