



Oral Health and Gastrointestinal Disorders

Oral health and gut health are more connected than you may think...

The Link between Oral Health and Gut Health

Initially, the link between the mouth and the gut may seem obvious - digestion starts in the mouth, where you chew and swallow your food. However, we are learning more every day just how interdependent our bodily systems are and how much our gastrointestinal health affects our overall health.

Gut health can greatly affect oral health and vice versa. In fact, the first signs of gastrointestinal disorders are often seen in the mouth. Disorders of the gut include inflammation in the digestive system and poor digestive function.

Inflammation is the immune system's natural response to tissue damage. The immune systems of those with chronic inflammatory gut disorders are put into overdrive, so that inflammation may be found in other areas of the body.

Poor digestive function includes the body's inability to properly absorb vitamins and minerals. Deficiencies in certain vitamins and minerals or an imbalanced gut bacteria can manifest with symptoms in the mouth.

Autoimmune Disorders and Oral Symptoms

An imbalance of good and bad bacteria in the gut can trigger autoimmune diseases, several of which present with oral symptoms:

- Pemphigus describes a group of skin blistering disorders, caused by autoimmune response and often presents with skin lesions
- Celiac disease is attributed to an autoimmune response to gluten and often presents mouth ulcers; those with celiac disease often find they have discolored or weak tooth enamel, increasing the risk of cavities
- Crohn's disease is also an autoimmune disorder, marked by chronic inflammation of the gastrointestinal tract; those with Crohn's disease often have lesions throughout the gastrointestinal tract, including the mouth



Poor Digestive Function and Oral Symptoms

Poor vitamin and mineral absorption is often a result of many gastrointestinal disorders and can cause several oral symptoms:

- Zinc deficiency can cause oral yeast infection (thrush)
- Vitamin B and folic acid deficiency can cause the tongue to swell
- Vitamin B12 deficiency can cause flat, red patches on the inside of the cheeks and on the gums
- General vitamin/mineral deficiency can cause Burning Mouth Syndrome (burning sensation in the mouth)



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