



Newsletter Articles

You fancy pool noodle you! Gum disease and bacteria entering your body.

Gum Disease and Bacteria Entering Your Body

By Paul Ansell - Dentist

Did you know that inside your mouth and digestive system is technically not “inside” your body? You are like a fancy pool noodle, and the internal passage starts at your mouth and ends at your bottom. Intrigued? Read on!

Think of your body as a thick tube with a hollow centre. Your mouth to your bottom represents the inner tube, and your skin represents the outer tube. Between these layers is, well, the inside bit of you.

Your outer skin and the lining of your internal tube do many things, and one of their most important jobs is forming a barrier—much like a nightclub bouncer deciding who is allowed inside and who isn't. Your club, your rules. (velvet rope)

If you scraped your leg and it didn't scab over, it would allow millions of bacteria to enter inside, causing infection.

When you have gum disease, also known as periodontal disease, you have the same open wound, but this time it is invisible and in your mouth—a place where billions of potentially harmful bacteria live. If your gums bleed, or are red or inflamed, it is a sign of active gum disease. There is a sneaky entrance into the nightclub, and the bacteria can get inside.

For some people, if we map out the area of open and infected gums, it would equal a wound the size of a coin. If you had a weeping, infected wound on your arm that did not go away for years, how would you feel about it?

Would you try and get it cleaned and healed? Would you feel better if it wasn't there, being a gateway for bacteria and toxins to invade your body?

It is the bacteria that enter our bloodstream, plus their toxins, and the inflammation and stress on the body that associates gum disease with diabetes, heart disease, and other conditions such as dementia and Alzheimer's. There is one particularly harmful bacterium called *Porphyromonas gingivalis* (P. gingivalis). Worse than P. Diddy, this is a real bad boy that breaks down your blood cells and protein to feast on them, damages the linings of your blood vessels, and is found in the brain tissue of those diagnosed with Alzheimer's.

Bacterial control and the healing and sealing of the gums are essential parts of oral and general health.

So, who decides who enters your club? For the most part, you do! The cleaner you keep your teeth and gums, the fewer bacteria are hanging out in your mouth trying to enter your bloodstream—not to mention causing damage to your teeth.

This means regular brushing, flossing, and using interdental cleaners to break up bacterial colonies as they form. Using appropriate products to reduce the number of harmful bacteria present is the most important step.

Your dental professional plays a crucial role here too. You cannot clean below the gum line well enough to remove scale (calculus), which harbours bacteria. This must be scraped off to bust up the bacterial colonies and allow the gum to seal over, preventing bacteria from entering.

Healthy gums are pink, seal against the tooth surface, and do not bleed during cleaning or gentle examination. That should be the combined goal of you, your dental professional, and all health experts.

"You'll find me in the club"—said no oral bacteria from now on. Got it?

Takeaway Points:

- Bacteria that sit on your teeth and gums can creep under the gum line and enter the bloodstream, along with their toxins.
- As a result of harmful oral bacteria entering the bloodstream, oral and dental diseases are associated with diabetes, heart disease, and Alzheimer's.
- Having an effective and regular oral hygiene routine (brushing, flossing, etc.) will keep your teeth and gums healthy while reducing the ability of harmful oral bacteria to enter the bloodstream.

- Attending the dentist for regular check-up and cleaning appointments is critical in maintaining oral health, as it removes calculus and bacteria that you cannot at home.
- Healthy gums are pink, sealed against the tooth surface, and do not bleed.

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