

Benefits Spotlight

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Medical Problems That May Cause Dental Issues

Health issues don't have to originate in your mouth to harm your teeth and gums. Be aware that illnesses from diabetes to ulcers can erode teeth, cause bad breath and even turn your tongue black!

Acid Reflux.

Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), or acid reflux, is often detected by dentists because a major sign of the disease is tooth erosion. Acidic juices from the stomach flow upward into the mouth and dissolve tooth enamel over time. When you experience a reflux episode, protect your teeth by rinsing vigorously with water or chewing sugar-free gum to stimulate saliva flow and reduce acid in your mouth. Do not brush your teeth immediately after experiencing reflux – the bristles can damage enamel already weakened by acid.

Ulcers.

Appearing as sores in the lining of your stomach or small intestine, ulcers are often the result of the bacterium *H. pylori*. These bacteria can weaken the protective coating of your stomach. Although ulcers won't hurt your oral health, the medicine used to combat the ulcer can turn your tongue black temporarily. Don't worry, the side effect is harmless.

Kidney Disease.

This disease often causes patients to develop fishy breath because the kidneys can no longer effectively filter waste and toxins from the blood. If you notice that you have fishy breath, visit your doctor. Kidney disease left untreated will lead to kidney failure.

Diabetes.

People with this disease have too much glucose (sugar) in the blood for an extended period and are more likely to have gum disease and lose teeth. Good oral health habits, however, can help lower the risk of these dental problems. If you have problems with your gums or teeth as a result of diabetes, take care in brushing and flossing teeth and talk to your dentist.

High Blood Pressure.

The medications often used to treat high blood pressure can have a side effect known as gingival enlargement. This condition causes the gums to swell and grow over the teeth – eventually leading to severe periodontal infection if left undeterred. Early detection and treatment of gingival enlargement can curb this condition before it becomes too severe.

The History of Oral Health: X-rays

- Physicist **Wilhelm Röntgen** accidentally discovered X-rays in 1895.
- The **first X-ray** ever taken was of his wife's hand. She had to hold her hand still for 15 minutes!
- The **"X"** stands for "unknown."
- The first dental X-ray took a whopping **25 minutes**.