



## The connection between oral health & breast cancer risk

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Breast cancer is one of the most prevalent forms of cancer among women. While various risk factors, such as genetics, lifestyle choices and hormonal influences often play a role, research suggests that oral health may also play a significant role in breast cancer risk.

### THE LINK BETWEEN ORAL HEALTH & SYSTEMIC DISEASES

Oral health is increasingly recognized as a critical component of overall health. Poor oral hygiene can lead to periodontal (gum) disease — inflammation and infection of the gums and surrounding tissues. Several studies have noted an association between periodontal disease and systemic conditions, including cardiovascular diseases and diabetes.

### PERIODONTAL DISEASE & CANCER RISK

Research also shows that individuals with periodontal disease may have an elevated risk of developing various cancers, including breast cancer. A study published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology* found that women with

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**SMOKING MAY  
MAKE IT HARDER  
TO FIGHT GUM  
DISEASE.**

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**EARLY DETECTION  
IS CRITICAL  
IN TREATING  
BREAST CANCER.**

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**LIMIT FOODS  
THAT ARE HIGH  
IN SUGAR.**

# The connection between oral health & breast cancer risk (continued)



a history of periodontal disease had a higher incidence of breast cancer compared to those with healthy gums.<sup>1</sup>

## ORAL BACTERIA & BREAST CANCER

To better understand the correlation of breast cancer and oral health, one area of research focuses on the role of oral bacteria in the development of breast cancer. A recent study found that women with higher levels of these bacteria were more likely to develop breast cancer, suggesting that oral infections might influence breast tissue health.<sup>2</sup>

## THE ROLE OF HORMONES

Hormones may also play a significant role in both oral health and breast cancer risk. For example, estrogen has been shown to affect gum tissue health, and women experiencing hormonal changes — such as during menopause or pregnancy — may be more susceptible to periodontal disease. In addition, certain oral health issues can influence hormone levels that may increase breast cancer risk.<sup>3</sup>

## PREVENTIVE MEASURES & RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the potential links between oral health and breast cancer, it is crucial for women to prioritize oral hygiene as part of their overall health.

Here are some tips to help manage your oral health:

- **Regular dental check-ups:** Routine dental visits can help detect and manage periodontal disease early, reducing inflammation and potential health risks.
- **Good oral hygiene practices:** Brushing twice a day with a fluoridated toothpaste, flossing daily and using antimicrobial mouthwash helps maintain oral health.
- **Healthy diet:** A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains can support both oral and overall health. Limiting sugar intake can also reduce the risk of dental issues.
- **Quit smoking:** Smoking is a significant risk factor for both periodontal disease and various cancers. Quitting can improve oral health and reduce cancer risk.
- **Manage stress:** Chronic stress can negatively impact both oral health and overall well-being. Mindfulness and stress management techniques can be beneficial.

While further research is necessary, the existing evidence suggests that women should be proactive about their oral health. By prioritizing oral care, women may not only protect their teeth and gums, but also potentially reduce their risk of breast cancer.

*Taking proactive steps in your oral health may significantly contribute to your overall well-being. Be sure to talk to your dentist about your oral health and discuss any medical conditions that you may have.*

<sup>1</sup>Cohen, L. A., et al. (2016). "Periodontal Disease and Breast Cancer Risk: A Case-Control Study." *American Journal of Epidemiology*. <sup>2</sup>Mizrahi, E., et al. (2019). "Oral Microbiome and Breast Cancer: A Review of the Evidence." *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention*. <sup>3</sup>Cochran, D. L. (2020). "Hormonal Changes and Oral Health." *Journal of Clinical Periodontology*.