

## Teeth, Inflammation and Health

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**Flossing teeth is often listed as one of the ways to promote healthy aging.** Our mouths are full of bacteria, as a part of our vast microbiome (i.e., composite mass of microbial organisms which live in and on us), in which the majority of oral organisms reside along the gum line, just waiting to cause cavities or periodontal (literally, around the teeth) infection. Effective flossing, not using amphetamines and controlling diabetes are the best ways to avoid periodontal disease (inflammatory infection of the gums) and tooth loss. It also helps to not be a mouth breather, since saliva is our natural way to combat dental infection.

How is this related to non-dental health?

**Inflammation from all sources**, including oral infection, and that which is caused by persistent allergies, asthma, some types of kidney failure, metabolically active internal abdominal fat, and autoimmune diseases, releases inflammatory molecules into the circulation, inflaming other organs and tissues, including arteries. All have been linked to a greater risk of diabetes, premature aging, and coronary heart and other vascular disease.

**The connection of inflammation to coronary heart disease is real:** Inflammation is at least one explanation for why cardiovascular disease is not completely proportional to or predicted by doctors' favorite risk factors, age, high blood pressure and cholesterol. I suppose there are other, currently unidentified and possibly environmental or genetic, factors, one of which is a bit odd - Some data suggests a correlation of coronary disease with having an earlobe crease. George W. Bush is one example of someone who has both, but a single example does not establish causation. Our current president also has a crease in his non-bullet-

damaged ear but has not yet had a vascular event that has been identified in the news.

I mentioned effective flossing above. Too many people don't do it right. It requires sliding the floss between the teeth, wrapping it into a C shape and scraping it up and down each tooth's side (after washing hands to avoid introducing new bacteria).