Why Oral Health Is So Crucial In the Longevity Equation

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BY MICHELE ROSS

If you track longevity metrics — things like ApoB, grip strength, or VO2 max — there’s one widely overlooked signal to add to the list: your gums.

Bleeding when you brush isn’t just a dental issue. It can be a sign that your **immune system** is contending with chronic inflammation, one of the hallmarks of aging and disease. That means the mouth isn’t an isolated system (funny, since insurance policies treat dental health as some kind of optional add-on). It’s actually one of the body’s busiest microbial ecosystems and one of its first lines of defense against the outside world.

As studies pile up, researchers are increasingly coming to the conclusion that your oral health can offer important clues about how you’re aging, and that oral hygiene is a major part of disease prevention. The goal isn’t to add another item to an already endless wellness checklist. It’s to recognize that the systems keeping us healthy are deeply connected.

Ahead, we unpack why oral health deserves a place in your longevity strategy — and highlight the habits experts suggest prioritizing now.

Why Oral Health Is Entering the Longevity Conversation

For decades, dentistry and medicine operated in separate lanes. But researchers are increasingly recognizing what dentists have long understood: the mouth doesn’t exist

separately from the rest of the body.

The mouth is home to one of the body's most diverse microbiomes, says **Arthur Glosman, DDS**, a cosmetic and restorative dentist in Beverly Hills, California.

"When that ecosystem is healthy, it helps protect us. But when it becomes imbalanced, we get a condition called oral dysbiosis, which can trigger chronic, low-grade inflammation throughout the body," he explains.

That inflammatory burden has been linked to several **age-related chronic conditions**, including cardiovascular disease, cognitive decline, osteoporosis, and metabolic dysfunction. (An important caveat: oral inflammation is unlikely to be the sole driver here, but it *is* a common thread.)

Of course, longevity isn't only about preventing disease. It's also about preserving the functions that are central in our daily lives — and your mouth is involved in quite a few. "You can't separate healthy aging from the ability to eat comfortably, maintain proper nutrition, sleep well, and speak confidently," Dr. Glosman tells Super Age.

A **2022 study** explored the connection between oral health and physical function in participants 70 years and older across an eight-year period. Among its chief findings:

- Tooth loss and difficulty eating were associated with weaker grip strength
- Poor periodontal health was associated with poor chair stand test performance and slower gait speed
- Dry mouth was associated with a decline in physical function

Your Mouth Is Connected to the Systems That Shape Aging

When oral hygiene falls short, a few things can go wrong. First, a bacterium called *Porphyromonas gingivalis* (*P. gingivalis)* can proliferate, which may provoke issues within and beyond the mouth.

“If you have poor oral hygiene, this bacteria can grow to infect the gums and then enter the bloodstream,” says **Jennifer Timmons, MD**, a longevity physician and the founder of Timmons Wellness. “Once circulating, the bacteria can inflame the blood vessels, damage the vessel walls, and contribute to tiny blood clots,” she adds.

In fact, cardiovascular disease is one of the areas where the connection between oral health and systemic health has been most extensively studied. One **2026 analysis of 30 studies** found that periodontal disease was associated with a 31 percent higher risk of developing cardiovascular disease. Gums that are red instead of pink and bleed while brushing signal that inflammation is present. Inflamed gums don’t just point to gingivitis and oral infection. They may be one of the few visible signs of a broader inflammatory state associated with accelerated aging.

Dr. Timmons notes that biomarkers like hs-CRP, which measures systemic inflammation and is used in cardiovascular risk assessment, tend to be **higher in people with poorer oral health**.

Researchers have also found evidence of oral bacteria — including *P. gingivalis* — in the brains of **some patients with Alzheimer’s disease**, fueling investigation into whether chronic oral inflammation may play a role in neurodegeneration.

And, oral health can trickle down to metabolic issues, as well. “Persistent inflammation in the body can impair insulin sensitivity, leading to poor glucose regulation and eventually type two diabetes,” warns Dr. Timmons. In fact, periodontal disease has been shown to have a **bidirectional relationship** with diabetes: diabetes exacerbates periodontal disease, while periodontitis impairs glycemic control and negatively influences the course of diabetes.

Despite these links, it’s important to note that correlation doesn’t mean causation. “While these associations don’t necessarily prove that gum disease directly causes every one of these conditions, they strongly suggest that oral inflammation is an important contributor to overall health,” says Dr. Glosman.

The takeaway: Oral health isn’t a side quest in longevity. It deserves to be part of the foundation.

4 Oral Health Habits to Add to Your Longevity Routine

If you’ve already mastered the **foundations of aging well**, consider your oral health another longevity lever. “For someone who already has their diet, exercise, stress, and sleep dialed in, oral health will be one more piece that can help increase your healthspan,” says Dr. Timmons.

Here are a few expert-vetted tips to support your teeth, gums, and oral microbiome — and thus your entire body.

1. Nail Down the Basics

Brush twice daily for two minutes. Floss every night. Don’t smoke. These fundamentals help maintain healthy gums, prevent bleeding, and reduce your likelihood of developing the chronic inflammation associated with periodontal disease.

2. Support Your Oral Microbiome

Limit your intake of added sugars. Drink enough water. **Eat a diverse, colorful diet rich in whole foods and fiber**. “What supports a healthy gut generally supports a healthier oral microbiome as well,” says Dr. Glosman.

3. Protect Your Sleep (and Your Bite)

Sleep issues like insomnia and sleep apnea can contribute to systemic inflammation, while nighttime grinding can damage teeth and strain the jaw, Dr. Glosman warns. If you wake up with headaches, jaw soreness, or worn teeth, consult your physician and/or your dentist rather than chalking it up to being a natural part of aging. **Build a sleep plan that supports longevity.**

4. Treat Dental Visits Like Preventive Medicine

Most people should visit their dentist every six months for a regular cleaning and checkup. Rather than waiting for symptoms to crop up, make preventive dental visits as routine as your physical with your GP.

“Regular examinations allow us to detect periodontal disease, oral cancer, bite problems, fractures, and other conditions while they’re still small and highly treatable,” says Dr. Glosman. “They often reveal what’s happening internally years before patients realize something is wrong.”

Ultimately, your dental visits aren’t just about preserving your smile. Dr. Glosman believes they’re part of the future of healthcare, in which all your providers play a collaborative role in helping you live and age better.

The Bottom Line

For someone who already prioritizes strength training, nutrition, sleep, and stress management, oral health may not feel like the next frontier of healthy aging. But longevity is rarely determined by one dramatic intervention, expensive supplement, or cutting-edge therapy. Instead, it’s supported by decades of protecting the systems that keep us resilient, functional, and independent — and your oral microbiome is one of those crucial systems.

“Longevity requires reducing inflammation, protecting function, and catching

problems early," says Dr. Glosman. "And oral health plays a much bigger role in that equation than most people realize."

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WRITTEN BY:



Michele Ross

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