

# Being overweight linked to higher risk of gum disease

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Impacting approximately one-third of the U.S. population, obesity is a significant health concern for Americans. It's a risk factor for developing type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and certain forms of cancer, and now, according to an article published in the January/February 2013 issue of *General Dentistry*, the peer-reviewed clinical journal of the Academy of General Dentistry (AGD), it also may be a risk factor for gum disease.

"We know that being overweight can affect many aspects of a person's health," says Charlene Krejci, DDS, MSD, lead author of the article.

"Now researchers suspect a link exists between obesity and gum disease. Obese individuals' bodies relentlessly produce cytokines, proteins with inflammatory properties. These cytokines may directly injure the gum tissues or reduce blood flow to the gum tissues, thus promoting the development of gum disease."

Half of the U.S. population age 30 and older is affected by gum disease—a chronic inflammatory infection that impacts the surrounding and supporting structures of the teeth. Gum disease itself produces its own set of cytokines, which further increases the level of these [inflammatory proteins](#) in the body's [bloodstream](#), helping to set off a chain reaction of other [inflammatory diseases](#) throughout the body.

Research on the relationship between obesity and gum disease is still ongoing.

"Whether one condition is a risk factor for another or whether one

disease directly causes another has yet to be discovered," says AGD Spokesperson Samer G. Shamoon, DDS, MAGD. "What we do know is that it's important to visit a dentist at least twice a year so he or she can evaluate your risks for developing gum disease and offer preventive strategies."

The best way to minimize the risk of developing [gum disease](#) is to remove plaque through daily brushing, flossing, rinsing, and professional cleanings.

"A dentist can design a personalized program of home oral care to meet each patient's specific needs," says Dr. Shamoon.

**More information:** [knowyourteeth.com/](http://knowyourteeth.com/)

Provided by Academy of General Dentistry

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