

Your gums reveal your diet

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Sweet soft drinks and lots of sugar increase the risk of both dental cavities and inflammation of the gums—known as periodontal diseases—and if this is the case, then healthy eating habits should be prioritised even more. This is the conclusion of a research result from Aarhus University.

Most of us are aware that sweets and other sugary food and drink increase the risk of dental cavities. A new research result now suggests that a sugary diet can also promote periodontal diseases.

The results have been obtained in connection with a critical review of the literature over the past fifty years, and have just been published in the international scientific journal *Journal of Oral Microbiology*.

"Sugar hasn't traditionally been associated with the development of periodontal diseases. It's true that back in the 1970s two American researchers suggested that a diet which was high in carbohydrates could be a common risk factor for both dental diseases and [inflammatory diseases](#) such as diabetes, obesity and heart [disease](#), but this knowledge was largely forgotten again," says Professor, Dr. Odont. Bente Nyvad from the Department of Dentistry and Oral Health at Aarhus University, who has headed the research.

"Today, there is general agreement that the above-mentioned diseases are associated with a high [sugar](#) intake. However, a [hypothesis](#) that could link and explain the two major dental diseases, caries and periodontitis, has been lacking," she says.

In the new research project, the researchers have arrived at a common hypothesis for the development of the two major dental diseases. The hypothesis is based on the biochemical processes that take place in the bacterial deposits on teeth when you add copious amounts of nutrients to the bacteria—particularly when you eat sugar.

"In other words, we revive the 'forgotten' hypothesis that sugar can promote both dental cavities and periodontal diseases," says Bente Nyvad, and emphasises the importance of continuing to brush your teeth with fluoride toothpaste, even if you cut down on sugar.

The researchers assumption is that periodontal diseases caused by sugar belong to the group of inflammatory diseases in line with diabetes, obesity and [heart disease](#). Bente Nyvad therefore recommends that healthy eating habits should be given much higher priority if the goal is to avoid expensive treatments in the healthcare system.

More information: Bente Nyvad et al, Integrated hypothesis of dental caries and periodontal diseases, *Journal of Oral Microbiology* (2020).
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Provided by Aarhus University

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