

The Link Between Stress, Anxiety, and Dental Health

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The Link Between Stress, Anxiety, and Dental Health

By Lucy Wyndham

It may come as a surprise, but mental health is closely related to oral health . Issues such as depression, stress, and anxiety can have an impact on the integrity of your teeth. According to the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey , almost two-thirds of people diagnosed with depression reported experiencing a toothache, while half of all clinically depressed individuals surveyed rated the condition of their teeth as fair or poor. There's also a fairly strong link between gum disease and poor mental health. Those with problems such as depression and anxiety need to take extra care when following a dental hygiene routine, to ensure that they keep their mouth clean and healthy.

The Causes of Poor Dental Health

The most common reason behind poor dental health in mentally taxed patients is the behavioral effects of stress and anxiety. It can be difficult to have the discipline to follow a strict tooth care routine when battling a mental health condition, which is why it's so important to take time out for self-reflection , which can give you the energy to put into everyday tasks. Depressed people are also more likely to have unhealthy diets and skip visits to the dentist.

Stress can also have physiological effects on the body. Spikes in the stress hormone cortisol weaken the immune system, which makes it easier for bacteria to invade the gums and cause inflammation. Certain antidepressants and anti-anxiety medications can cause dry mouth, which means that saliva isn't available to clear away food debris after eating.

Those with severe anxiety sometimes exhibit symptoms such as canker sores and teeth grinding. Both of these are detrimental to oral health, with both short-term and long-term effects. In the case of teeth grinding , patients may

permanently wear down essential molars and cause irreparable damage to protective enamel.

How to Care for Your Teeth

While it can be difficult for those suffering from depression and anxiety to establish a dental health routine, it's critical to do so to keep the teeth and gums healthy. All individuals should aim to brush their teeth twice daily, and floss at least once each day. It's also a good idea to use mouthwash to help rinse away debris and kill off dangerous bacteria. If necessary, people who are having trouble remembering to care for their teeth can set a morning and evening alarm to remind themselves to brush.

Poor mental health can take its toll not only on the mind, but also the body. Stress, anxiety, and depression can all affect oral health and lead to the onset of gum disease and tooth decay. It's important that people suffering from mental health issues remember to take proper care of their teeth each day, to keep their mouth in good condition.

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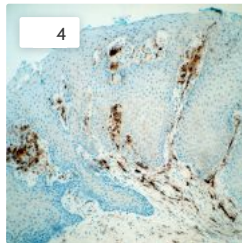
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