

# Aging Gracefully...

by Dr. Yolanda Cintron

**A**s we get older, many changes occur in our bodies that increase our risk of death or disease. Men and women will experience a decrease in hormones that produces changes in their oral cavities, drying their mouth and increasing silent gum and teeth infections, bad breath, and cavities. One of the worst changes is called periodontal disease.

We see menopausal and perimenopausal women and andropausal men who never before had bone loss now experiencing tooth mobility, gum recession, root exposure, bleeding gums, dry mouth, bad breath, an increased number of cavities and teeth sensitive to cold, hot, sweets and/or air.

Periodontal disease is an overlooked epidemic with grave consequences; it ranks as one of the top six infectious diseases worldwide. Unfortunately, as it is contagious, kids can get it from their parents, grandparents, nannies, teachers, etc. My youngest patients were eight and 10 years old. Although I do not see children, I was compelled to ask a couple who had moderate to advanced gum infection to bring their children to be checked and treated. This saved the lives of the parents and prevented the children from developing heart disease.

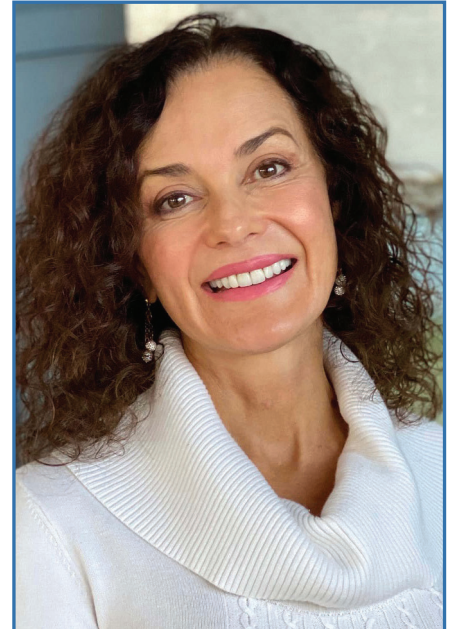
Statistics say that in the United States alone, over 50 percent of the population suffers from gum infections. In my experience, 99 percent of our patients have it and were never told or treated for it. Despite its prevalence, a mere three percent get diagnosed and treated.

How is it that with half of our patients harboring periodontal disease, so few receive treatment? This

oversight is alarming, given that the disease stands as a leading cause of tooth loss in the U.S. Although it originates as a local infection in the oral cavity, its repercussions resonate systemically. Ignoring it jeopardizes your overall health. In the 80s, it was called the Silent Killer in 20/20 and 60 Minutes documentaries.

If you bleed when brushing, flossing, or have bad breath, you have chronic oral gum infection spreading into your heart, lungs, sinuses, brain, and predisposing you to other systemic consequences. For instance, periodontal infections make it challenging to control diabetes and vice versa. Oral infections are also linked to cardiovascular diseases, stroke, dementia, various cancers, hypertension, premature births, and several other ailments. Timely treatment not only fosters oral health but also mitigates the risk of these associated diseases. Indeed, numerous studies indicate that addressing periodontal disease reduces hospitalizations for those with comorbidities such as diabetes, coronary artery disease, and cerebrovascular disease. Insurance company research further underscores the financial benefits, revealing marked reductions in hospitalization costs when gum disease is treated.

So, with such compelling evidence, why does periodontal disease diagnosis and treatment lag? It may boil down to mere lack of knowledge, oversight, responsibility, or habit. Having your teeth and gums checked and cleaned at least every three months is ideal. Undertaking comprehensive examinations to diagnose and treat the disease will undoubtedly promote longer tooth preservation and enhanced systemic health. Habits are powerful deter-



minants of human behavior. Much like daily rituals of brushing teeth, getting dressed, or taking morning showers, introducing and adhering to healthy oral habits relies on established structures and protocols.

Isn't it time that we all shift gears? By instituting standard protocols, we pave the way for improved patient general health outcomes. Embracing this change is a win-win—benefiting patients, their families, practitioners, and the broader community (gum infections are contagious). The path to better health could very well start with acknowledging and combating the not-so-silent epidemic of periodontal disease. Call us and check this off your to-do list. We offer painless Periodontal Laser advanced technologies! Your Health is Your Wealth. You will be thankful you did!

For more information on how your oral health is connected to your overall health, call us or visit our websites, [GoNaturalDentistry.com](http://GoNaturalDentistry.com), [DrYolie.com](http://DrYolie.com).