



## Periodontal Health and the Battle of the Sexes

Periodontal disease and its associated complications affect both men and women, so it's important that both sexes are doing everything they can to maintain their periodontal health.

However, research<sup>1</sup> published in the *Journal of Periodontology* suggests that women are more proactive in maintaining healthy teeth and gums than men. In fact, the study found that women are almost twice as likely to have received a regular dental check-up in the past year, and women in the study also had better indicators of periodontal health, including lower incidence of dental plaque than men.

Overall, the study suggested that women have a better understanding of oral health, as well as a more positive attitude towards dental visits. This understanding is important for women, as hormonal fluctuations throughout a woman's life may affect her periodontal health and, therefore, overall health. Certain life stages may increase women's susceptibility to periodontal disease, which may require special attention:

- **Puberty:** Studies show that elevated hormone levels may cause an increase in gum sensitivity and lead to a greater inflammatory reaction, which can cause gums to become swollen, turn red, and feel tender.
- **Menstruation:** During menstruation, some women may experience menstruation gingivitis, which may cause gum bleeding, redness, or swelling of the gums between the teeth.

- **Menopause:** Hormonal changes may cause women to experience discomfort in their mouths, including pain, burning sensations in the gum tissue, or mouth sores.

Men have special periodontal health considerations, as well. A June 2008 *Lancet Oncology* study found that men with periodontal disease may be more likely to develop kidney cancer, pancreatic cancer, and blood cancers. Periodontal disease has also been linked to higher risk of developing prostate cancer.

Both men and women should strive for periodontal health by brushing twice each day, flossing at least once each day, and seeing a dental professional, such as a periodontist, regularly. Additionally, it's a good idea to get a comprehensive periodontal evaluation every year. A dental professional, such as a periodontist, can conduct this exam to assess your periodontal disease status.

<sup>1</sup> M Furuta, D Ekuni, K Irie, T Azuma, T Tomofuji, T Ogura, M Morita, 2011. *Gender differences in gingivitis relate to interaction of oral health behaviors in young people. Journal of Periodontology* 82 (4): 558-565.



### Oral Health Survey: Men vs. Women

A recent survey conducted by the American Academy of Periodontology found some interesting results including:

- Women are 26 percent more likely than men to floss on a daily basis.
- 74 percent of women would be embarrassed by a missing tooth (a possible consequence of periodontal disease), compared to 57 percent of men.
- Women are almost twice as likely to notice missing teeth on another person than men.
- 44 percent of women are aware that periodontists can help contribute to overall good health, compared to 33 percent of men.

Source: *The American Academy of Periodontology*



The American Academy of Periodontology Patient Page is a public service of the AAP and should not be used as a substitute for the care and advice of your personal periodontist. There may be variations in treatment that your periodontist will recommend based on individual facts and circumstances. Visit [perio.org](http://perio.org) to assess your risk and for more information on periodontal disease.