

BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



Take Care of Your Teeth, Protect Your Brain

The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is working to develop brain healthy communities, creating a culture that promotes brain health protective factors and decreases risk factors, thereby improving brain health, optimizing brain performance, and preventing and fighting brain illness across the lifespan for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond.

Most of us dread those trips to the dentist, but we understand that it is important for having a nice smile. Good oral hygiene may also be important to our brain health. Research suggests that the same bacteria that leads to gum disease is also present in people with Alzheimer's disease.

Periodontitis, or gum disease, is the leading cause of tooth loss. The bacteria linked to gum disease trigger an immune response in our bodies and the resulting inflammation destroys healthy tissue. In addition to tooth loss, gum disease has been linked to a higher risk of cardiovascular disease, stroke, and diabetes. Researchers have now found *Porphyromonas gingivalis*, one of the main pathogens responsible for gum disease, in the brain tissue and its DNA in the spinal fluid of Alzheimer's patients.

People with Alzheimer's disease have an over-accumulation of beta-amyloid plaques in their brain tissue, and some researchers think beta-amyloid may be the brain's response to protecting itself from invaders such as bacteria and viruses.

Scientists point out that while this link between gum disease and dementia is interesting, it does not prove that gum disease causes Alzheimer's. Regular brushing and flossing may not prevent dementia, but it is also an important part of protecting our overall health.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

The best way to prevent periodontitis and reduce inflammation is good oral hygiene. Good mouth health has an impact on the overall health of your body and may be a protective factor to brain health.

- **Daily brushing and flossing.** Brush your teeth at least twice a day, and floss before bedtime. Don't forget to thoroughly clean dentures and dental appliances, which can harbor bacteria.
- **Don't smoke.** Smokers have a much higher risk — three to six times depending on how much you smoke — of developing periodontitis.
- **Eat a healthy diet.** A diet rich in vegetables, fruits, legumes, nuts, and fatty fish helps suppress inflammation and provides the essential nutrients for your brain and body. Evidence suggests the omega-3 fatty acids found in fatty fish may reduce your risk of developing periodontal disease.
- **BE BRAIN HEALTHY and adopt a lifestyle** that includes thoughts, behaviors, emotions, responses, and language that promote brain health protective factors:
 - Stress resilience
 - Nutrition
 - Physical activity
 - Sleep
 - Social connection
 - Emotional wellbeing
 - Meaning and Purpose
 - Cognitive stimulation and creativity
 - Engaging with nature
 - General health
 - Positive impacts

About the Brain Health Initiative (www.brainhealthinitiative.org)

The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is a cutting-edge, new approach to protecting brain health, optimizing brain performance, and fighting brain illness across the lifespan. The BHI is a collaborative effort with Massachusetts General Hospital, a Harvard Medical School Teaching Hospital, to build brain healthy communities through education, collaboration, research, innovation, and action, with a specific focus on *brain health promotion, prevention, early detection, evidence-based intervention, and optimization of performance*. The BHI is creating a culture that promotes brain health protective factors and decreases risk factors, thereby improving brain health and optimizing brain performance outcomes for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. Join the **Be Brain Healthy** movement, **because brain health matters, and lifestyle makes a difference**. To view all Brain Health Boosts [click here](#).