

Better dental health

# OBESITY and the RISK to your gums



According to a recent Harvard School of Public Health study, obesity can lead to a significantly greater risk of gum (periodontal) disease. But what exactly is obesity and how can it affect your gums and teeth?

## A poor diet leads to poor oral health

“Obesity” means an individual has so much body fat that his or her health is in danger<sup>1</sup> as measured by BMI or “body mass index.”<sup>2</sup> The causes of obesity include genetic, biological, behavioral and cultural factors. Although certain medical disorders can cause obesity, less than 1% of all obesity is caused by physical problems.<sup>3</sup> Obesity occurs when a person eats more calories than the body burns up.<sup>3</sup>

Obesity can lead to type 2 diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, arthritis, sleep apnea and even stroke. But did you know obesity also increases your risk for gum disease? Here’s how:

A diet high in fat and calories, including large quantities of processed foods or sugar, and a lack of physical activity, leads to obesity. Those same foods can cause oral health problems including gum disease, premature tooth loss and bad breath.

Poor diets may result in a lack of essential nutrients, potentially making it more difficult for your body to fight off an infection in your mouth.<sup>4</sup> Among obese Americans aged 18–34, gum disease was 76% more common than for normal weight individuals in that age group.<sup>5</sup>

1. [www.ama-assn.org](http://www.ama-assn.org)
2. Centers for Disease Control, [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)
3. American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, [www.aacap.org](http://www.aacap.org)
4. American Dental Association, [www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org)
5. American Academy of Periodontology, [www.perio.org](http://www.perio.org)

## Tips for keeping a healthy weight and smile

- Control portions and consume fewer calories
- Reduce your sugar intake
- Drink water rather than soft drinks
- Avoid candies, cookies, cakes, pastries and french fries
- Avoid junk food and fast foods
- Do not use food as a reward
- Increase your physical activity
- Brush twice a day and floss each night after brushing
- Visit your dentist regularly

## Obesity is also a problem for children<sup>3</sup>

- Between 16% and 33% of children and adolescents are obese, meaning they weigh at least 10% more than what is recommended for their height and body weight.
- Childhood obesity can begin as early as age five to six.
- A child who is obese and aged 10–13 has an 80% chance of becoming an obese adult.
- When one parent is obese, there is a 50% chance that the children will also be obese. When both parents are obese, that risk increases to 80%.



**GO YOU**<sup>SM</sup>



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