

This information is forwarded by the **Love Thy Neighbor Ministry** at Saint Rose of Lima Catholic Church, Milton FL.  
Source of Information: The Catholic Foundation of Northwest Florida. Due to the many references, some may not be current but have many useful reference sources. Emails are sent using the Blind Carbon Copy (BCC) method.

This quality of life series focuses primarily on senior citizens plus other supplemental information. You do not have to be a Senior to make use of this information. If you know of a Senior, a parishioner or a neighbor who could use this information you are invited to give them a copy of this email. Fellowship through improved communications is guided by the second greatest commandment. Sometimes an act of kindness can be as simple as a phone call, a visit, or receipt of an email.

**Suggestion: Create a separate folder of this information for ease of future reference.**

For information about our Parish, click on the following link: <http://parishesonline.com/scripts/HostedSites/Org.asp?ID=14423>

**Our parish spirit is rising, is rising.**

Gum Disease: A Silent Epidemic that Affects Millions of Seniors

[http://www.legacygifts.org/savvy\\_senior.jsp?WebID=GL2004-0129&D=200738](http://www.legacygifts.org/savvy_senior.jsp?WebID=GL2004-0129&D=200738)

Dear Savvy Senior,

I recently read that gum disease can cause all different types of deadly health conditions. As a senior who brushes regularly and flosses occasionally, what can you tell me about this?

Hate to Floss

Dear Hate to Floss,

By taking better care of your mouth (which includes daily flossing), you could actually add years to your life! Here's what you should know.

Gum Disease

Also known as periodontal disease, gum disease is a silent epidemic in this country. Currently, 80% of all adults in the United States have some form of gum disease - which ranges from simple gum inflammation (called gingivitis), to a serious disease (called periodontitis) that can infect the gums, bone and other tissue surrounding the teeth.

Dangerous Consequences

If you have gum disease, you have greatly increased your risk of having a heart attack or stroke. How? Because the bacteria-rich plaque that builds up on your teeth (that's what causes gum disease) releases toxins into your bloodstream that can inflame your arteries and cause small blood clots. But that's not all. There are other health problems linked to gum disease such as pancreatic cancer, respiratory diseases, kidney disease, diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, stomach ulcers and even pregnancy complications.

Are You at Risk?

Most people develop gum disease because they simply don't keep their mouths clean. But there are other factors that can increase your risk:

Smoking - Need another reason to quit? Smoking is the number one risk factor for gum disease.

Age - Older people have a greater risk of periodontal disease because they have more wear and tear on their gums.

Genetics: If you have a family history of gum disease your risk goes up.

Medications - Some medications (antihistamines, antidepressants, high blood pressure medications, some heart medicines and many others) can cause dry mouth and the lack of saliva contributes to gum disease. If you have dry mouth, talk to your doctor or dentist.

Deficient diet - A diet lacking proper amounts of calcium and vitamin C can contribute to gum disease too.

Hormonal changes - Changes that occur during pregnancy, menopause or even menstruation can make gums more susceptible for women.

Diabetes - People with diabetes have a higher risk of developing gum disease. It also makes blood glucose levels harder to control.

Savvy Tip: Check your risk for gum disease at [www.perio.org](http://www.perio.org) - click on "Assess Your Gum Disease Risk."

## Simple Solutions

It only takes about five minutes a day to keep your gums healthy. Here are some simple and familiar ways you can take the bite out of gum disease:

Brush - At least twice a day, brush your teeth using fluoride toothpaste and learn how to brush properly. See [www.webmd.com/oral-health](http://www.webmd.com/oral-health) for a refresher course on brushing and flossing. Also use a toothbrush that has soft bristles. Hard or stiff bristles are more likely to injure your gums. And be sure to replace your brush every three months or so. (Tip: Power toothbrushes with rotating or vibrating bristles have shown to be more effective at removing plaque than manual brushes.)

Floss - Do it at least once a day either before or after you brush. The sequence doesn't matter as long as you do a thorough job. Flossing removes plaque and food particles from between the teeth and under the gum line and is absolutely necessary.

Get checkups - See your dentist every six months for regular cleanings and oral exams.

## Dental Services

If you don't have dental insurance or can't afford professional dental care, some communities and clinics offer discounted or free services to seniors in need, and most dental schools offer low-cost checkups and cleanings.

Contact your state dental association (see [www.ada.org/ada/organizations](http://www.ada.org/ada/organizations)) or your Area Agency on Aging (call 800-677-1116 to get your local number) to find out what may be available in your area. Also check out the Bureau of Primary Health Care ([www.ask.hrsa.gov/pc](http://www.ask.hrsa.gov/pc); 888-275-4772) and the National Foundation of Dentistry for the Handicapped ([www.nfdh.org](http://www.nfdh.org) - click on "Donated Dental Services" or call 888-471-6334).