

# Can Gum Disease Lead to ALZHEIMER'S?

If you've ever witnessed someone you love slip away from the vibrancy of life with a diagnosis of Alzheimer's Dementia, you have my knowing sympathy. Sadly, the prevalence of this disease is on a steady rise, and it's projected to affect 160 million people globally by 2050!

The real tragedy of this diagnosis is fueled by our inability to respond with medical advancements of any kind that can help prevent or reverse the cognitive decline. That may seem shocking, given the effective treatment strategies we've developed for many other non-communicable diseases: Cardiovascular Disease, Diabetes, most cancers, etc.

Why can't we seem to design an effective medical remedy for Alzheimer's? The answer lies in its complexity. Research has uncovered a litany of lifestyle-related contributing factors, including Obstructive Sleep Apnea, exposure to environmental toxins and yes, Periodontal (gum) Disease. But before we dive into that, it's important to reference genetic risks.

The genetic test for pre-disposition to Alzheimer's is readily available—and the gene is called APOE-4. Anyone can succumb to Alzheimer's, but genetics helps. Inheriting one copy of the gene (from one parent) puts you at 30% increased risk, and two copies (one from both your parents), 50-90%. Because there's no magic remedy available, many avoid testing. I get it. But Dr. Dale Bredesen, author of *The End of Alzheimer's* offers hope, even for the genetically unlucky. His ReCODE protocol (an acronym for Reversal of Cognitive Decline) is helping thousands of patients, prevent—and YES, reverse—early stages of dementia.

Keep in mind that *all* disease, including this one, progresses on a cellular level. With Alzheimer's the neurons (brain cells) develop amyloid proteins and tight weaves that strangulate the natural wiring-and-firing. Far beyond the genetic predisposition, lifestyle-related risk factors are individualistic. In simplifying the complexities, Dr. Bredesen was able to classify Alzheimer's into three root-cause sub-categories. 1) chronic systemic inflammation, 2) lack of production of neuron-supporting substances, and 3) exposure to environmental and food toxins.



While *inflammation* has a variety of root causes of its own, one of the most common is Periodontal (gum) Disease. Common, because it doesn't generate pain, so most people don't know they have it until it's a significant health threat. Today, Periodontal Disease infects 50% of US 30-year-olds and 70% of 50-year-olds!

How does it contribute? Red, puffy, inflamed gum tissue is an open portal for dangerous strains of mouth bacteria, yeast, and Herpes (Simplex 1) Virus to enter the blood stream. Evidence has revealed the presence of *all three* of these bug families living inside the shrinking brains of many Alzheimer's patients.

One of the bacteria strains responsible for gum disease, *Treponema denticola* (Td) is both *neurotropic* (lives inside of live nerve tissue) and *motile* (travels along the neurons themselves). *Candida* (yeast) and the Herpes Simplex 1 (virus), can also enter inflamed gum tissue and travel to infect the brain. Even if you don't have "pockets", bleeding-when-flossing or red gums, it's best to have a saliva test for the presence of all five of the most dangerous periodontal bacteria including Td *and* nine different strains of *Candida* (yeast).

Learning about prevention of all three sub-categories of Alzheimer's is a gift, even if you're genetically unlucky...in fact, *especially* if you're genetically unlucky. For more information, check out Dale Bredesen's book and ReCODE protocol as well as Ingar Olsen's 2015 publication, *Can Oral Infection be a Risk Factor for Alzheimer's Disease?*



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