

Go Green for Healthy Teeth and Gums

A recent study suggests that antioxidants in green tea may help reduce periodontal (gum) disease.

With origins dating back over 4,000 years, green tea has long been a popular beverage in Asian culture, and is increasingly gaining popularity in the United States. And while ancient Chinese and Japanese medicine believed green tea consumption could cure disease and heal wounds, recent scientific studies are beginning to establish the potential health benefits of drinking green tea, especially in weight loss, heart health, and cancer prevention. A study recently published in the *Journal of Periodontology*, the official publication of the American Academy of Periodontology (AAP), uncovered yet another benefit of green tea consumption. Researchers found that routine intake of green tea may also help promote healthy teeth and gums. The study analyzed the periodontal health of 940 men, and found that those who regularly drank green tea had superior periodontal health than subjects that consumed less green tea. Study Abstract *

“It has been long speculated that green tea possesses a host of health benefits,” said study author Dr. Yoshihiro Shimazaki of Kyushu University in Fukuoka, Japan. “And since many of us enjoy green tea on a regular basis, my colleagues and I were eager to investigate the impact of green tea consumption on periodontal health, especially considering the escalating emphasis on the connection between periodontal health and overall health.”

Male participants aged 49 through 59 were examined on three indicators of periodontal disease: periodontal pocket depth (PD), clinical attachment loss (CAL) of gum tissue, and bleeding on probing (BOP) of the gum tissue. Researchers observed that for every one cup of green tea consumed per day, there was a decrease in all three indicators, therefore signifying a lower instance of periodontal disease in those subjects who regularly drank green tea.

Green tea’s ability to help reduce symptoms of periodontal disease may be due to the presence of the antioxidant catechin. Previous research has demonstrated antioxidants’ ability to reduce inflammation in the body, and the indicators of periodontal disease measured in this study, PD, CAL and BOP, suggest the existence of an inflammatory response to periodontal bacteria in the mouth. By interfering with the body’s inflammatory response to periodontal bacteria, green tea may actually help promote periodontal health, and ward off further disease. Periodontal disease is a chronic inflammatory disease that affects the gums and bone supporting the teeth, and has been associated with the progression of other diseases such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

“Periodontists believe that maintaining healthy gums is absolutely critical to maintaining a healthy body,” says Dr. David Cochran, DDS, PhD, President of the AAP and Chair of the Department of Periodontics at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio. “That is why it is so important to find simple ways to boost periodontal health, such as regularly drinking green tea—something already known to possess certain health-related benefits.”