

YOUR DENTIST CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE

Yes, a woman's oral health can change throughout life

By Dr. Gabrielle Cannick

Let me start by reminding everyone this is Women's Breast Cancer Awareness month, an important annual effort to increase public awareness of this devastating illness. The sobering fact is approximately 250,000 women in the US will be diagnosed with breast cancer — this year. More than 40,500 will die.

There is no sure way to prevent breast cancer. But there are things you can do that might lower your risk. Medical research has linked some forms of breast cancer to alcohol consumption, obesity and lack of exercise. The American Cancer Society recommends maintaining a healthy weight throughout life by balancing your food intake with physical activity. And of course, women should take advantage of today's better screening that can lead to early detection.

Ladies do not ignore this.

Further, I want to take this opportunity to emphasize that women also have unique oral health



Dr. Gabrielle F. Cannick

care challenges throughout their lives.

My female patients will often ask, "Do my oral health needs change as I age? If so how?" Due to normal hormonal

fluctuations, women's oral health needs change at different stages throughout life, i.e. puberty, pregnancy. Moreover, medical research has shown there is a relationship between cyclical changes over the course of a woman's life and the presence of gum (periodontal) disease — even potentially accelerating the destruction this can cause to teeth and gums.

Here are oral health symptoms women should watch for at key life stages:

Puberty. An increased level of sex hormones may cause increased blood circulation to the gums resulting in mouth and gum tissue sensitivity and

irritation from food particles and plaque.

Pregnancy. Gums may become swollen, turn red and feel tender. Note: pregnant women diagnosed with periodontal (gum) disease are more likely to have pre-term, low birth weight babies.

Menopause and post-menopause. Changes and discomfort in the mouth can occur, including dry mouth, pain and burning sensations in the gum tissue, and altered taste.

Of course, not every woman is affected in the same way during these stages. However, studies reveal that approximately 23 percent of women ages 30 to 54 have periodontitis, the advanced stage of periodontal disease with active destruction of gum tissues. For women ages 55 to 90 it jumps to 44 percent. Periodontal disease is called a "silent" disease. Many women do not realize they have it. It's been linked to serious health conditions including diabetes and arthritis.

Women's oral health is indeed unique.

My advice is to be prudent, vigilant, and proactive. Be sure to schedule regular, preventive dental checkups. If you have questions, please contact us. Think of us as your hometown resource for guidance and support.

Dr. Gabrielle F. Cannick is the owner of Grand Oaks Dental, located at 3905 Liberty Highway in Anderson. A strong believer that dental fear and anxiety should not prevent any patient from receiving the highest quality dental care, Dr. Cannick has received extensive training in Sedation Dentistry and is a certified member of the Dental Organization for Conscious Sedation. She is also a member of the South Carolina Dental Association, the American Dental Association, the Academy of General Dentistry, and the American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine. For more information about Grand Oaks Dental and the services provided, please call 864-224-0809, or click to grandoaksdental.com or visit us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/GrandOaksDental>.

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