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# NEWS FROM AROUND THE PROBE

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## Swollen Joints and Missing Teeth Often Go Hand in Hand

The American Academy of Periodontology encourages rheumatoid arthritis (RA) patients not to brush off daily oral hygiene because you may have a greater risk of losing your teeth to periodontal disease, a bacterial infection of the gums.

A study published in the Journal of Periodontology found that people with RA were twice as likely to have periodontal disease with moderate to severe jawbone loss. In fact, they averaged 11.6 missing teeth versus 6.7 in the control group.

The Joint connection between RA and periodontal disease is due to similar pathologies; damage caused by the immune system and chronic inflammation are central to both diseases.

In RA, the immune system attacks a person's own cells inside their joints. White blood cells that are part of the normal immune system travel to the synovium (a thin layer of cells that line the joints and produces lubricating fluid) and cause inflammation.

As RA progresses, these abnormal cells invade and destroy cartilage and bone within joints. Muscles, ligaments and tendons that support and stabilize joints become weak and unable to function normally.

In turn, periodontal infections inflame the supporting tissues of the teeth and destroy attachment fibers and supporting bone that hold teeth in the mouth.

At this point, researchers are not saying the relationship between the two diseases is causal. However, some scientists think bacterial infections may trigger the disease process in some of the estimated 2.1 million people with rheumatoid arthritis.

The Straight Facts: Patients with RA should continue daily brushing and flossing and look for signs of periodontal disease, such as red, swollen gums that bleed easily.

The earlier you detect periodontal disease and treat it, the better off you are.

### Joint in Motion

Arthritis is the leading cause of disability, limiting daily activities for more than 7 million citizens. Because of its debilitating nature, the disease can take a tremendous toll on a person's life whereby they are physically unable to continue daily activities such as oral hygiene. The following tips will allow you to complete your daily oral hygiene routine with less pain and more mobility.

*P.S. They also make good gift ideas.*

**Go Electric:** Use electric toothbrushes and/or floss holders to reduce the amount of work that must be done by hand

**Grip It:** Wrap toothbrush handles with a sponge hair roller or a PVC pipe to make a better, more comfortable grip.

**Stay Wet:** Speak to your dentist about ways to restore and maintain moisture in your mouth due to medications

**Handle with Care:** Replace knob-type faucets with levers

**Pick it Out:** Try water irrigators to remove food particles between teeth.

**Walk the Walk:** Stick with your daily oral hygiene routine for regular checkups.



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## Why Periodontal Plastic Surgery?

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Do you feel your smile is aging you? Do you hide your teeth when you smile because you don't like your missing teeth or gummy smile? If these scenarios sound familiar, periodontal plastic surgery is for you. Periodontal plastic surgery can improve the esthetics and function of your smile. A soft tissue graft can reduce further recession and bone loss. Crown lengthening uncovers the tooth or teeth and improves function, allowing you to once again feel the tooth or teeth. An online survey was posted on the AAP Web site to find out what patients had to say about their experiences with periodontal plastic surgery.

- *I'm thrilled with the results. Every day someone asks me about my smile and compliments me on it.*
- *I cannot believe fixing my gums would make me look so much younger.*
- *The surgery maximized the look of my smile with minimal discomfort.*
- *Wow. It looks better than I ever expected. I caught myself smiling freely at a party, which is something I haven't done in a long time.*

- *I cannot believe fixing my gums would make me look so much younger.*
- *The procedure improved my smile and changed my personality because I smile more.*
- *I was excited about the results from crowns and veneers, but the improvement of the gums made it beyond my imagination.*
- *Wow. I was tired of having teeth that were different lengths. Now the gum length flows.*
- *I finally have the perfect smile for my wedding.*
- *My teeth are no longer sensitive when I breathe in cold air.*

**What will You say following periodontal plastic surgery?**



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## Reflect a Beautiful Smile

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When you smile in the mirror are you reflecting pearly white teeth? Since first impressions are everything, make it memorable with a winning smile. A dazzling “Hollywood smile” will boost your confidence to be successful in job interviews, meeting new people, or feeling confident when smiling.

Periodontal plastic surgery can help you “knock the socks off” anyone by improving your smile.

Cosmetic surgery has become a popular trend since Americans are living longer and wanting to look as young as they feel. Periodontal plastic surgery has also felt this trend as it has experienced a significant shift toward cosmetic-related surgery to help make smiles last a lifetime.

### Gummy Smile

If your teeth look short and your smile is gummy, crown lengthening might be your answer. During this procedure, excess gum tissue is removed to expose more of the crown of the tooth. The gum line is sculpted to give your smile just the right look.

### Long Teeth

Gum recession can cause the tooth root to become exposed, and make teeth look long. This can make you look older than you are. Recession can happen as a result of many causes including periodontal diseases. Whatever the reason, exposed roots are unattractive and can leave you at risk of developing cavities on

your tooth root. Soft tissue grafts and other root coverage procedures are designed to cover exposed roots, to reduce further gum recession and to protect vulnerable roots from decay.

### Missing Teeth

If you are missing teeth, dental implants might be your answer. Dental implants are a natural looking option compared with dentures or bridges because implants look and feel just like your own teeth. Implants also allow you to speak and eat with comfort and confidence. During this procedure, an artificial tooth root is placed into your jaw, and after a healing period, an artificial tooth is attached to the root.

### Indentations of the Gums and Jawbone

Tooth loss can cause an indentation in the gums and jawbone where the tooth used to be. This happens because the jawbone recedes when it is no longer holding a tooth in place. This indentation is unnatural looking and can cause the replacement tooth to look longer than the adjacent teeth.

Ridge augmentation fills in this defect and recaptures the natural contour of the gums and jaw. A new tooth can then be created that is natural looking, easy to clean and beautiful.

For more information about periodontal plastic surgery, talk to your periodontist. To view before-and-after photos of periodontal plastic surgery, visit the AAP Web site at [www.perio.org](http://www.perio.org).



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