



Your comprehensive guide to

INTEGRATIVE DENTISTRY

What is Integrative Dentistry?

4

How is integrative dentistry different?

5

Patient-centred care.

An integrative, science-based healthcare approach.

Integrating best medical practices.

The integrative medicine approach to dental assessment

6

The whole-body connection

7

Gum Disease and Periodontitis

Heart Disease

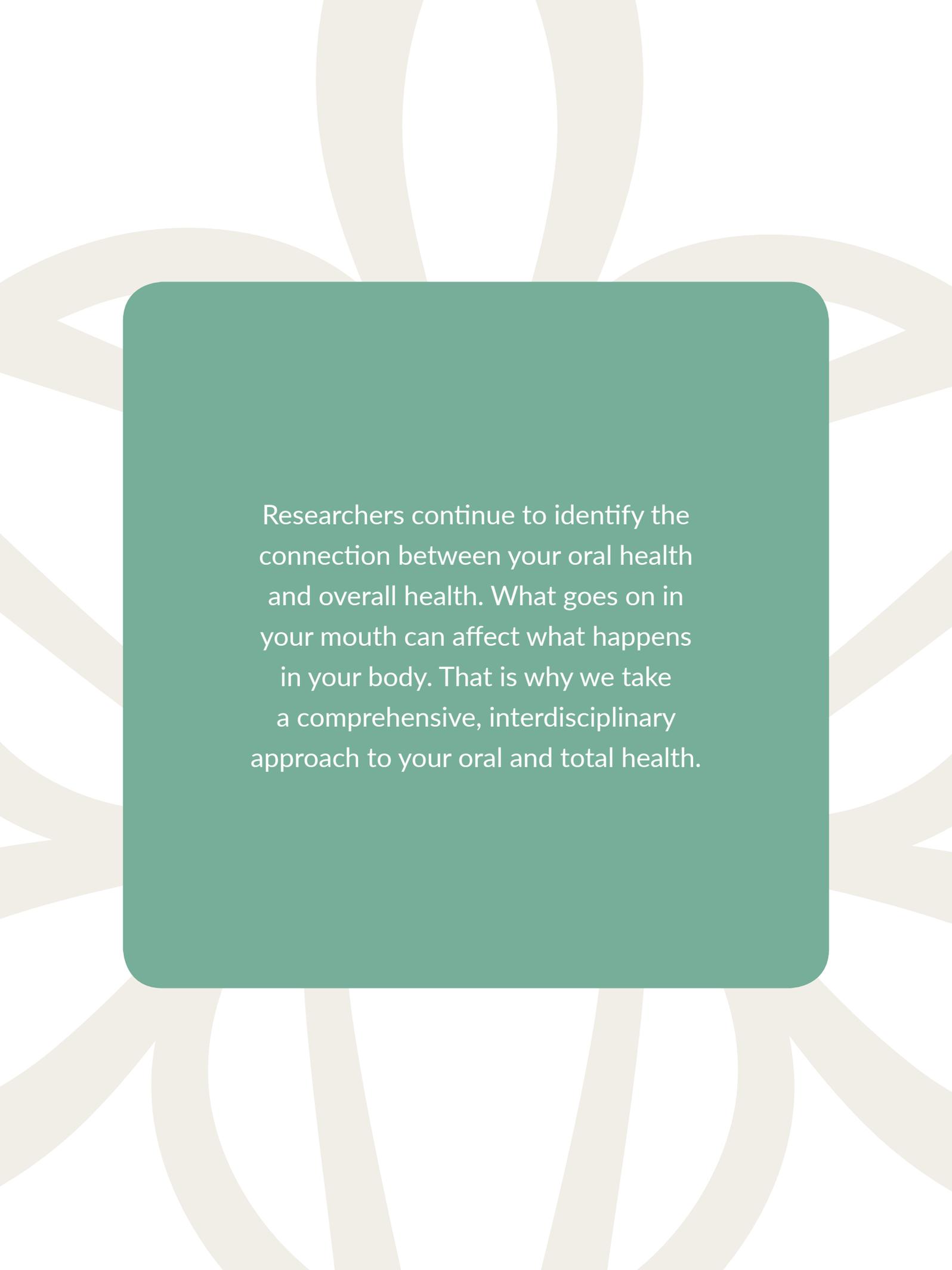
Stroke

Diabetes

Other Health Conditions

Pittsford Dental Excellence Center

8



Researchers continue to identify the connection between your oral health and overall health. What goes on in your mouth can affect what happens in your body. That is why we take a comprehensive, interdisciplinary approach to your oral and total health.



What is Integrative Dentistry?

Integrative medicine determines how and why illness occurs; it aims to restore health by addressing the root causes of disease for each individual. Integrative medical practitioners view the body as one integrated system, not a collection of independent organs divided up by medical specialties. Integrative medicine based dentistry is the application of the principles and practices of integrative medicine with the practice of the art and science of dentistry.

Integrative medicine believes that a patient's history, physiology, and lifestyle are fundamental factors when evaluating a patient's health. Examination and interpretation of a patient's individual biochemistry and genetics can give clues and a better understanding of a patient's overall health.

Likewise, in integrative dentistry, a dentist doesn't just treat tooth decay, bad breath, or gum disease. He knows that these are merely outward symptoms of larger problems and looks to address those instead. The goal of integrative dentistry is to look beyond the mouth: How does the patient eat? Drink? Sleep? Etc.

Common questions an integrative dentist may ask include:

- Do you eat mints or candy throughout the day?
- Do you sip on a soda for an hour while you study or watch TV?
- Do you breathe more through your nose or mouth?
- How much of your diet is comprised of sugar, carbs, and/or highly acidic foods?

These questions may seem to be unrelated to cavities or gum recession, but the truth is that they provide invaluable information about the state of a patient's oral microbiome, as well as the dryness and pH level of the mouth. Each of these factors directly impacts the risk for tooth decay, gingivitis, and a host of other concerns.



How is integrative dentistry different?

Integrative medicine applies a holistic approach to the body and overall wellness; it involves understanding the origins, prevention, and treatment of complex, chronic disease. Integrative dentistry applies the same holistic approach to the mouth that integrative medicine does to the body. Hallmarks of integrative dentistry include:

Patient-centred care.

The focus of integrative medicine is on patient-centred care, promoting health as a positive vitality, beyond just the absence of disease. By listening to the patient and learning his or her story, the practitioner brings the patient into the discovery process and tailors treatments that address the individual's unique needs.

An integrative, science-based healthcare approach.

Integrative medicine practitioners look “upstream” to consider the complex web of interactions in the patient's history, physiology, and lifestyle that can lead to illness. The unique genetic makeup of each patient is considered, along with both internal and external factors that affect total functioning.

Integrating best medical practices.

Integrative medicine integrates traditional Western medical practices with what are sometimes considered “alternative” or “integrative” medicine, creating a focus on prevention through nutrition, diet, and exercise; use of the latest laboratory testing and other diagnostic techniques; and prescribed combinations of drugs and/or botanical medicines, supplements, therapeutic diets, detoxification programs, or stress-management techniques.

Integrative medicine practitioners promote wellness by focusing on the fundamental underlying factors that influence every patient's experience of health and disease.



The integrative medicine approach to dental assessment

An integrative dental practitioner will consider multiple factors, including:

Environmental inputs – the air you breathe and the water that you drink, the particular diet that you eat, the quality of the food that is available to you, your personal level of exercise, and any toxic exposures or traumas you have experienced all affect your health.

Mind-Body elements – Psychological, spiritual and social factors can all have a profound influence on your health. These areas help the integrative dental practitioner see your health in the context of you as a whole person, not just your physical symptoms.

Genetic make-up – Although individual genes may make you more susceptible to some diseases, your DNA is not an unchanging blueprint for your life.

Through assessment of these underlying causes and triggers of dysfunction, the integrative medicine practitioner is able to understand how key processes are affected.

The whole-body connection

The basics of integrative dentistry are simple: Dentistry should do no harm, and dentists must look at the mouth, teeth, gums and jaws as integral parts of a larger, whole body system.

Integrative dentists see the mouth as more than just a processing station for food. The health and structural integrity of the mouth powerfully influence and are influenced by everything else going on in the body, from skeletal mechanics to nutritional biochemistry.

Many studies support the connection between oral and overall health. For example, researchers at the University of Buffalo in New York showed that people with periodontal disease have a two- to four-times greater risk of suffering a heart attack. This tie is acknowledged by even general dentists, many of whom employ the heart-disease angle to encourage their patients to floss. However, not all dental professionals acknowledge the connection between the mouth and the body.

There are many factors behind the connection between oral and overall health, these include:

Gum Disease and Periodontitis

This serious gum infection can allow oral bacteria to enter your blood stream and cause other health problems.

Heart Disease

Recent studies done at the University of Rochester show that oral bacteria has the ability to attach to fatty plaques in the arteries surrounding the heart, helping to form clots that could lead to a heart attack.

Stroke

Oral bacteria may attach to fatty plaques in the arteries of the brain helping to form clots, which can block blood flow.

Diabetes

Diabetes and periodontal disease are bi-directional, and diabetics develop gum disease (periodontitis) more easily because diabetes slows the body's natural healing process.

There are over 52 different bacteria that are directly implicated in systemic diseases from periodontal disease. In addition, blood-sugar levels may be adversely affected by the infection of gum disease, causing complications for diabetics.

Other Health Conditions

Acid reflux may lead to enamel erosion on your molars or on the backside of your teeth leaving you susceptible to decay. Certain medications have side effects that can leave you with dry mouth, gingival enlargement and other side effects, which can leave you vulnerable to decay and gum disease.

Pittsford Dental Excellence Center

At Pittsford Dental Excellence Center, our comprehensive approach to dental treatment can also detect poor nutrition and hygiene, improper jaw alignment and signs of developing oral and overall health problems. Seeing the dentist regularly helps to keep your mouth in top shape. Dr. Guarnieri can draw the important connection between your oral health and your overall health and then work with you to develop the treatment plan to meet your total health needs.

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