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Dementia and gum disease

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Good dental health may help stave off dementia, according to a new study. Previous research has found that gum disease– causing bacteria can produce a roving protein that destroys brain cells, reports the New York Post. For the new study, scientists tested gum swabs and cerebrospinal fluid samples from 48 people. All were over 65 years old—older people are more prone to gum disease and dementia—and healthy. The researchers found that the people with higher levels of "good" oral microbes had lower levels of amyloids, proteins that have been linked to cognitive decline when they build up in cerebral arteries. As suspected, those individuals also had a lower chance of developing dementia. While the link isn't entirely clear, the researchers think the good oral bacteria prevents amyloids from heading to the brain. Study author Angela Kamer, from New York University, says the results "show the importance of the overall oral microbiome—not only of the role of 'bad' bacteria but also 'good' bacteria—in modulating amyloid levels."