

# If Your Teeth Could Talk...

## An Oral History

A dental exam can reveal some telltale signs of broader health problems.

### Teeth

**Front:** Don't be fooled by very white teeth. Many oral health problems may be lurking unseen.

**Tops of back molars:** Worn, flattened surfaces indicate stress-related clenching and grinding.

**Back of uppers:** Area where stomach acid has worn away enamel could indicate bulimia.

### Gums

Red, puffy and inflamed gums are common during pregnancy.

Tiny red hemorrhages with spontaneous bleeding may indicate leukemia.

Periodontal disease, in which gums pull away from the teeth, can signal diabetes, cardiovascular problems and respiratory diseases.

### Inside cheeks and lower gums

Diffuse brown patches are a sign of Addison's disease, a hormonal disorder.

Ulcerated lesions could mean cancer has metastasized.

### Inside the mouth

A smooth, flat tongue could indicate iron-deficiency anemia.

Dark red patches on the underside of the tongue may flag pernicious anemia, a vitamin B12 deficiency.

'Strawberry' textured tongue with red bumps points to Kawasaki disease, an inflammation of the blood vessels.

Tongue nodules and ulcerations are an early sign of sarcoidosis, an inflammation of the organs.

Dry mouth is a side-effect of many medications, but it could also signal diabetes or autoimmune diseases, including rheumatoid arthritis, lupus and lymphoma.

