Today’s a pretty exciting day — it’s Day 1 of your Oral Microbiome Reset!

Utilizing these steps with patients, I’ve seen cavities reversed, gum disease halted, and overall health improve in more ways than I can count.

**By Day 28, that will be you, too.**

**Microbiome Reset Step 1:**

Choose today to commit to every. Single. Step.

Not sure if you have it in you to make 28 days’ worth of steps towards better health?

Here are 3 reasons you should go ahead and commit today.

1. **It’s not hard.**

Some of the steps in the reset are going to sound very easy.

Others are going to make you sigh in frustration because “I can’t do that.”

It would be really easy to ignore a few emails or avoid the steps because it’s kind of inconvenient.

**You know what’s really hard?**

*Sitting in the dentist’s chair when he looks at you and says you need another painful procedure.*

*Hearing your gum disease has finally caused the kind of gum recession that will leave you in pain every day for the rest of your life.*

*Finding out you’ve got a potentially fatal illness, decades after you knew you had the tools to give your body a fighting chance to prevent it.*

*Waiting for the anesthesiologist to put you out while you undergo a surgery for a (preventable) oral disease.*

*I can’t promise you’ll never experience another infection or illness.* But I *can* promise that these 28 days can change your health for the better, if you’re willing to stick to it.
2. It requires effort.

And so does anything that’s actually worth doing.

*It’s going to take some effort to go shopping.*

*You’ll need to be intentional to take the tools I send you and actually implement them.*

Part of participating in this reset is taking responsibility for your health. You are the best and most effective advocate for your own health.

It starts today, when you decide to tell yourself that you’re worth the effort.

3. When it comes to food, you don’t have to explain your choices to anyone.

Typically, the most challenging part of this reset is week 2, when you make changes to your diet.

It’s an obstacle for several reasons, like unhealthy relationships with food that many of us carry, but the pitfall I hear most often sounds like this: “It was my Aunt Marjorie’s birthday party and I just *couldn’t* skip the cake!”

*The reality here is that everything you put in your body happens by choice, not by accident.*

Each nutritional step you take is something I’m asking you to commit to 100% during this reset. We’ll also talk about how to introduce these things back into your life in healthy, flexible ways that don’t make you feel starved.

That being said, you are under no obligation to explain your dietary choices to anyone. Use the beautiful phrase, “No, thank you!” and make the choices that are actually right for your mouth and body.

Commit to following each and *every step over the next 28 days*. Anything less, and you won’t experience a true reset of this *vital* piece of your health.

*Don’t sell yourself — or your transformational results — short.*

After all, it’s only 28 days.

You’ve got this.

---

**Reset Together Tip:**

Post in the Facebook group explaining why you chose to do this Reset.
Because I want you to understand the steps you’re taking during this Reset, I thought today was perfect for a crash course on the oral microbiome.

Oral Microbiome: The Basics

The Surgeon General, in 2000, called the mouth “a mirror of health and disease in the body.”

A delicate balance of bacteria exists in your mouth on every surface, including:

- Tongue
- Hard palate
- Teeth
- Area around tooth surfaces
- Above and below the gums

One simple way to look at it is that there are “good” and “bad” bacteria that live symbiotically (in a specific balance). There are also fungi, mycoplasma, protozoa, and viruses in addition to bacterial strains.

When these microorganisms are out of balance, things go wrong.

But that's actually a little oversimplified.

**In reality, it's not so much about “good” and “bad” but about “pathogenic” and “non-pathogenic” organisms.**

Certain bacteria (take *P. gingivalis*, for instance) are considered “pathogenic” because they cause disease when present in large amounts. *P. gingivalis* is one of the bacteria responsible for chronic gingivitis and gum disease, and for cavity-causing plaque when it's found closely concentrated with a few other pathogenic strains.

**Takeaway:** Getting rid of all your oral bacteria is useful only on rare occasions when the oral biome is very dysbiotic (out of balance). It’s not good for your oral or overall health on a regular basis, just like taking antibiotics all the time would be terrible for your gut.

There are a little over 700 different species of bacteria identified as part of the oral microbiome, many of which can also be found in the gut, on the skin, and in the vaginal microbiome in women.

Oral health is a reflection and extension of overall health, and it’s not a “closed system.”

In her book on the oral microbiome, Cass calls these two major microbiomes “kissing cousins,” playing on the fact that they have so much in common.

To use her words of how this works:

“You are swallowing at least 140 billion bacteria each day, seeding your gastrointestinal tract with the microbes from your mouth.”
I explain it to patients like this: Your mouth is the headwater to your gut. It’s the entry point where most microorganisms come in, some of which hang out in the mouth for awhile, and others of which make their way into the gut.

About 45% of oral bacteria can also be found in the gut, according to Cass' research.

**Microbiome Reset Step 2:**

**Put the candy, desserts, and sugary snacks away for the duration of the Reset.**

High-sugar diets are bad for the oral microbiome because of the way bacteria feed on sugar compounds.

If you’re making all the right choices with dental hygiene, sleep, dental visits, and even eating health-promoting foods, and you’re still loading up on sweets, you won’t produce a positive result.

That’s why step 2 is so important.

For the duration of the Reset, set aside and don’t eat anything from this list:

- All forms of soda (including diet soda)
- All forms of candy containing sugar
- Honey, maple syrup, sorghum
- Chewing gum with sugar
  (sugar-free gum sweetened with xylitol — not aspartame — is totally acceptable)
- Cupcakes, cookies, cakes, and any desserts that use grain-based flours
- Donuts
- Ice cream
- Milkshakes, frappuccinos, lattes, or any coffee drink with sugar
  (you can still use sugar substitutes stevia, erythritol, and/or monk fruit, but avoid regular milk)
- All forms of alcohol except for organic wine
- Pancakes or waffles
- Chocolate bars sweetened with sugar
  (monk fruit-, erythritol- or stevia-sweetened options are okay)
- Fruit juice

Concerned you’ll slip up? Try these tips for staying on the straight and narrow:

1. **Don’t just put these foods in a “sweets” cabinet; get them out of the house entirely.** It’s much easier to fall off the wagon when you’ve got immediate access to what you’re trying to avoid.

2. **If you enjoy a treat, like those from the above list, when you’re at a certain restaurant, choose a different place to eat.** Again, a big part of not giving into temptation is staying away from what will entice you to give in. Choose to skip your standard spot and pick a place your brain doesn’t associate with dessert instead.
3. **Replace those treats with microbiome-friendly alternatives.** We’ll get more into healthy swaps next week, but for now, grab a Bai or glass of unsweetened tea instead of a soda. Grab a box of xylitol-sweetened chewing gum like Pür. Choose heavy cream or almond milk as milk alternatives in your latte, and request no sweetener or use a sugar-free version. Enjoy a glass of hot tea in the evening rather than indulging in ice cream. Whatever works for you, do it.

4. **Stay accountable.** Whether it’s keeping up with others in the Reset via Facebook or just talking to your partner/spouse/roommate/coworker about what you’re doing, let people know you’re making a change. Accountability is a major part of sticking to something important.

Got more ideas for substitutions or how to kick the sweets for 4 weeks? Post them in the Facebook group! I’d love to hear your ideas.

**Reset Together Tip:**

Comment on at least 3 other people’s introduction posts in the Facebook group and say hello.

---

**Further Reading:**

*Heal Your Oral Microbiome* by Cass Nelson-Dooley, MS — Chapters 1-3

*The Microbiome and Overall Health Part 5: The Oropharyngeal Microbiota’s Far-Reaching Role in Immunity, Gut Health, and Cardiovascular Disease*


*The Human Oral Microbiome*


*Oral microbiome: Unveiling the fundamentals*


*Mobile Microbiome: Oral Bacteria in Extra-oral Infections and Inflammation*


*Oral microbiomes: more and more importance in oral cavity and whole body*

DAY 3

It’s important to recognize when dysbiosis happens in your mouth.

Why does this matter?

This Oral Microbiome Reset is designed to change your oral and overall health forever. But it’s easy to fall back into old habits, so this will help you recognize if it begins to happen.

There are a few simple ways that you can keep an eye out for dysbiosis in your oral microbiome. While some are obvious, there may be a few surprises on the list.

If you recognize these symptoms (today or 20 years from now), there’s a very high probability you’ve got a dysbiotic oral microbiome.

Cavities

Tooth decay (cavities) develop when a large concentration of the same pathogenic (disease-causing) bacteria congregate on the same spot without being disorganized, or moved.

Those bacteria consume the carbohydrate compounds in your mouth from food and excrete acid that eats away at tooth enamel and, eventually, dentin.

Oral Bacteria Associated with Cavities:

- *Streptococcus mutans*
- *S. sobrinus*
- *S. downei*
- *Lactobacillus acidophilus*
- *L. casei*
- *L. fermentum*
- *L. rhamnosus*
- *Actinomyces naeslundii*
- *A. odontolyticus*
- *A. gerencseriae*
- *A. israelii*
- *A. naeslundii*
- *Bifidobacterium dentium*

Gum Disease

Periodontitis (gum disease) starts when pathogenic microorganisms cause inflammation that damages gum tissue around the teeth.

The early sign of this is bleeding and tender gums, but as it develops, bacteria destroy gum tissue and eventually the alveolar bone that holds your teeth in place.
Oral Bacteria Associated with Gingivitis & Gum Disease:

- *Fusobacterium* spp.
- *Actinomyces* spp.
- *P. micra*
- *P. gingivalis*
- *Aggregatibacter actinomycetemcomitans*
- *Tannerella forsythia*
- *T. denticola*
- *Eubacterium saphenum*
- *Treponema* spp.

**Bad Breath**

The reason traditional mouthwash helps (very) temporarily with bad breath is because it destroys the bacteria at the root. However, it also gets rid of the good bacteria that would otherwise crowd out the bad stuff. A major reason you experience chronic bad breath is because you’ve got a dry mouth, which I’ll address later in this reset course.

Oral Bacteria Associated with Bad Breath:

- *Prevotella* spp.
- *P. gingivalis*
- *Actinomyces* spp.

**Pulpitis**

Inflammation of the tooth pulp happens for a few reasons, but in every case, it has to be corrected by root canal or extraction. It’s not reversible. When it’s caused by a dysbiotic oral microbiome, there’s a higher chance it will happen again.

It’s always better to prevent these problems whenever you can, rather than treating them later with invasive procedures.

Oral Bacteria Associated with Pulpitis:

- *E. faecalis*
- *Porphyromonas endodontalis*
- *A. odontolyticus*
- *Parvimonas micra*
- *Prevotella intermedia*

**Chronic Root Canal Infection**

I rarely recommend root canals, as they always carry a risk of infection after the fact (no root canal is 100% clean). Unfortunately, with a dysbiotic oral and/or gut microbiome, these infections are more likely.
Oral Bacteria Associated with Chronic Root Canal Infection:

- Dialister invisus
- Olsenella uli
- Synergistes spp.

**Inflammatory Bowel Diseases**
(Crohn’s, Ulcerative Colitis, & IBS)

Although the oral microbiome isn't the only thing that contributes to inflammatory bowel disease, it's one factor that's been identified.

These conditions are connected very closely to microbiome issues, including leaky gut, and the inflammation is also correlated with oral microbiome dysbiosis.

**Oral Bacteria Associated with Inflammatory Bowel Diseases:**

- Streptococcus spp.
- Prevotella spp.
- Neisseria spp.
- Haemophilus spp.
- Veillonella spp.
- Gemella spp.

**H. pylori Infection**

Over 50% of the world lives with *Helicobacter pylori* bacteria in the gut — and recent research tells us it's in the mouth, too.

While it's common to try and wipe out *H. pylori* overgrowth/infection with antibiotics, most people get re-infected because it's still living in the mouth.

**Poor Immune Function**

Your oral microbiome is part of your immune system, 70-80% of which is housed within the gut microbiome. But don’t let the percentages fool you: the mouth is the gatekeeper to the gut and is vitally important.

Frequent illnesses and infections are typically a sign that your immune system is compromised in some way. Whether it's from an autoimmune condition, a leaky gut, or a dysbiotic microbiome, you can rest assured that dysbiosis plays a part.

**Diabetes**

This chronic disease is multifactorial in the way it develops, meaning it happens because of many different reasons put together.
Although it’s easy to consider weight or poor diet as the main factors, which is reasonable, it’s also true that those with diabetes have incredibly dysbiotic oral microbiomes. It’s not entirely clear which issue causes the other, or if these are simply two things that go hand-in-hand and contribute to one another.

**Oral Bacteria Associated with Diabetes:**

- Aggregatibacter spp.
- Neisseria spp.
- Gemella spp.
- Eikenella spp.
- Selenomonas spp.
- Actinomyces spp.
- Capnocytophaga spp.
- Fusobacterium spp.
- Veillonella spp.
- Streptococcus genera

**Adverse Pregnancy Outcomes (APOs)**

Miscarriages, preeclampsia, low birth weight in infants and several other problems with pregnancy have been linked to disruption in the oral microbiome.

Researchers believe one reason for this is that a mother’s biomes are transferred to the fetus. If the balance of bacteria is incredibly dysbiotic, it may be impossible for the fetal body to handle these problems without some sort of impact.

**Oral Bacteria Associated with APOs:**

- F. nucleatum
- P. gingivalis
- Bergeyella spp.

**Obesity**

How do you identify a person is obese? One way is to determine their body mass index, but a large study discovered that you might be able to recognize obesity based solely on a report of oral bacteria.

In the study, 98.4% of participants had a uniquely high amount of the *Selenomonas noxia* bacteria within their oral microbiome.

**All bacteria are not bad.**

The lists of bacteria above may give you a lot to think about. But if I can give you one major takeaway, it’s this: *Constantly “wiping out” all the bacteria in your mouth isn’t the answer.*

You’re just setting the stage for an overgrowth of the same problematic bacteria.
I use this analogy a lot, but clearing your mouth of all bacteria is like antibiotics for the gut. In some rare situations, it can be helpful to set the stage for rebuilding your microbiome, but this should only be in cases where dysbiosis has already gotten out of control.

Plus, even if you kill almost all the bacteria in your mouth, it takes intentionality to make sure what replaces it is a healthier oral microbiome.

It’s my goal, instead, to teach you how to balance your oral microbiome so the “bad stuff” doesn’t crowd out the good.

**Microbiome Reset Step 3:**

Get rid of any major bacteria busters you still have in your dental hygiene routine.

This includes **antibacterial mouthwash, breath strips,** and any **toothpaste with triclosan.**

All three of these products are marketed with the promise: **KILLS 99.9% OF BACTERIA!**

The problem with that is **good bacteria get wiped out, too.**

In the case of triclosan, it may even be responsible for health dangers like cancer, hormone issues, and allergies.

Here’s what to look for specifically when cleansing your dental routine...Get rid of anything:

- Using “kills 99.9% of bacteria” as a marketing slogan
- With “triclosan” listed in the ingredients (also goes by “biofresh”, “microban”, “irgasan”, “lexol”, “ster-zac”, and “cloxifenolum”)
- With alcohol as a main inactive ingredient, which will dry out the mouth and throw off the pH balance
- Listing “chlorine dioxide,” “chlorhexidine,” or tertiary amine on the ingredients, which are antibacterial agents found in many mouthwashes
- Utilizing SLS (sodium lauryl sulfate), which may lead to canker sores for some people

Unlike the foods you set aside yesterday, everything on this list should be tossed permanently. Each of them will only reverse the progress you’re working towards and potentially damage your oral microbiome again.

**So, what do you do if you throw out your toothpaste and mouthwash?**

Fortunately, mouthwash isn’t necessary to oral health. There are excellent DIYs and natural options out there, but you can actually stop using it altogether.
If you miss the time you spend swishing, try replacing that time by oil pulling instead. This super simple trick involves swishing coconut oil (or pure MCT oil) in your mouth for about 60 seconds, then spitting it into the trash.
I'll talk about it more during week 3, but coconut oil is a great anti-inflammatory agent that's great for managing the microorganisms in your mouth.

As far as toothpaste goes, there are two basic options.

Your first option is to **brush without toothpaste for the next few days** before your Hyperbiotics toothpaste arrives. A brush with a bit of water is all you need to disorganize bacteria, and it's better to use no toothpaste at all than with an antibacterial toothpaste.

The other option is to visit your local drugstore or grocery store to pick up a non-toxic tube of toothpaste. Earthpaste and Dr. Bronner’s are available at most Trader Joe's and Whole Foods, as well as some nationwide drugstore chains. *This is not necessary unless you feel unable to brush without toothpaste.

---

**Reset Together Tip:** Not sure if you should throw something out? Post a photo in the Facebook group and I’ll let you know!

---

**Further Reading:**

The Oral Microbiome & Its Impact on Every Other System in the Body — AsktheDentist.com

Is Triclosan in Colgate Total Safe? — AsktheDentist.com

Heal Your Oral Microbiome by Cass Nelson-Dooley, MS — Chapters 7-8

Beyond the oral microbiome

Porphyromonas gingivalis: An Overview of Periodontopathic Pathogen below the Gum Line

Dysbiosis of Salivary Microbiota in Inflammatory Bowel Disease and Its Association With Oral Immunological Biomarkers
Helicobacter pylori in the oral cavity and gastric mucosa: a meta-analysis.

Subgingival biodiversity in subjects with uncontrolled type-2 diabetes and chronic periodontitis.

Is Obesity an Oral Bacterial Disease?
Part of dental health in the modern age is regularly seeing your dentist.

Dental cleanings are a great way to support your oral microbiome, for several reasons:

1. Your hygienist can point out places you miss regularly on brushing and flossing, making sure that bacteria doesn’t build up in one area and lead to infection.
2. Areas of plaque buildup from bacteria that have hardened into tartar can’t be disorganized by brushing, but they can be removed during a cleaning.
3. Regular cleanings give your hygienist and dentist an opportunity to spot warning signs of serious oral diseases, from the first stages of gum disease to potentially cancerous lesions.

Microbiome Reset Step 4:
Schedule your next dental cleaning. If you haven’t been to the dentist in more than 12 months, see if there’s an availability in the next two weeks.

If you’re working with a functionally-minded dentist, s/he can also help give you nutritional counseling to deal with specific issues. You may also talk with your functional dentist about how to approach dental treatments with your microbiome in mind.

If you’re not yet working with a functional dentist, look for one in your area.

Searching for a Functional Dentist Online

It can be helpful to start with a local search (“functional dentist near me”), but if you live in a less populated area, you may not find anything right away.

Here are a few databases to search, including organizations I personally belong to and a few others that have good search functionality:

1. American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine (AADSM)
2. Academy of General Dentistry (Chicago, IL)
3. American Academy for Oral Systemic Health (AAOSH)
4. Holistic Dentistry
5. Campaign for Mercury-Free Dentistry
6. International Academy for Biologic Dentistry and Medicine (IABDM)
7. Huggins Applied Dentistry (application required)
8. Mercury-Safe Dentist Directory
4 Questions to Identify a Functional Dentist

When readers ask me how to find a functional dentist, I tell them to start with a few simple questions to ask before the first visit:

1. **Do you use amalgam in your office?** No truly functionally-minded dentist will still be using amalgam fillings, so this is a great place to start.

2. **What is your approach to the first stages of tooth decay?** You’re listening for an answer that has to do with nutritional counseling, or even a broader (functional) look at lifestyle habits, hygiene, etc. I would advise against a dentist who immediately starts talking about fillings or just brushing and flossing more regularly.

3. **What are your primary goals in patient care?** Ideally, you’d hear an answer that talks a lot about coaching for prevention and helping patients need less work in the future. It’s also a good sign if a dentist talks about wanting to choose the **least invasive method of treatment**.

4. **Are you a part of any dental associations?** While I’m not an ADA member, I belong to other organizations of dentists that more closely line up with my personal approach to dentistry from a functional perspective. For me, this includes the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, Academy of General Dentistry, and American Academy for Oral Systemic Health. There’s no “wrong” answer here, but learning the associations your dentist has joined may give you a picture of what they value.

Help! There are no functional dentists near me.

It can be helpful to start with a local search (“functional dentist near me”), but if you live in a less populated area, you may not find anything right away.

Here are a few databases to search, including organizations I personally belong to and a few others that have good search functionality:

- **If you have tooth decay** that your dentist recommends should be filled or root canaled, talk to him/her about the potential for reversing the decay. By adjusting your dental hygiene, diet, and addressing sleep problems (all of which we’ll discuss in detail as part of this reset), you may be able to remineralize teeth to the point more drastic procedures aren’t necessary.

- **Avoid amalgam (mercury) fillings.** A 2011 report published in *The Journal of Occupational Medicine and Toxicology* points out that “dental amalgam is by far the main source of human total mercury body burden.” Since mercury is about 10x more toxic than lead and toxins in the mouth can greatly alter your oral microbiome, just say no to amalgam.

- **Ask your dentist if you show evidence of teeth grinding.** Nighttime bruxism, or grinding, is associated with sleep apnea. People with sleep apnea and related conditions often sleep with an open mouth, which dries out the mouth and will allow bacteria to grow unchecked more easily.

- **If you have gum disease,** talk to your dentist about your progression risk and the possibility your gum disease is related to systemic conditions, such as diabetes or...
heart disease. Some cases of gum disease would better be classified as autoimmune, since they involve the body's immune system overreacting to normal tissue.

- **Don’t feel like you have to say “yes” to everything.** Over the years, I’ve seen dentists recommend unnecessary root canals because it was easier (and more lucrative) than doing a large filling. That’s just one example of how it’s easy to get in the habit of prescribing work based on a drill/fill/bill approach rather than a functional one. If you don’t feel comfortable with a recommendation, particularly because you’re not sure how it will impact your oral microbiome, you don’t have to say yes right away. You can get a second opinion or just take some time to research on your own until you know what’s right for you.

I wish you the best of luck in your search!

**Reset Together Tip:** Have you had a memorable experience with a dentist, good or bad? Tell us about it in the Facebook group.

Further Reading:

- **Functional Dentistry: Everything You Need to Know** — AsktheDentist.com
- **How to Find a Good Dentist: 7 Tips + 10 FAQs** — AsktheDentist.com
- **Demineralization–remineralization dynamics in teeth and bone**
- **Sugar Alcohols, Caries Incidence, and Remineralization of Caries Lesions: A Literature Review**
- **Is dental amalgam safe for humans? The opinion of the scientific committee of the European Commission**
Today, I've got a very important tip that may sound elementary, but is vital to your oral microbiome.

**Microbiome Reset Step 5:**

**Drink at least 64 ounces of water today + throughout the reset.**

Hydration is *vital* to a healthy oral biome because the mouth is supposed to stay moist. In my own practice, I’ve seen more oral disease caused by dry mouth than just about anything else.

While a dry mouth is a perfect space for bacterial overgrowth, hydration provides a buffer that makes it harder for bacteria to stay organized in one specific area to cause problems.

It also helps you produce more saliva on a regular basis, which is an additional buffer to pathogenic bacteria.

I’m not a big fan of fluoridated tap water, so I personally use a filter pitcher to get rid of it.

However, if you’re also avoiding fluoride with me but don’t want to invest in a filter, you can stick to bottled water. Bottled water containing fluoride has to be labeled as such, and most bottled water is fluoride-free.

**Not sure if you’re able to track how much water you’re drinking? Here are some tips:**

1. **Use a glass or stainless steel reusable water bottle** with clear measurements. For a 32-ounce bottle, you’ll need to drink 2 full bottles of water. There are also options for techie water bottles like the PYRUS that sync with a phone app to let you know how much you’ve ingested.

2. **Put four 16-ounce disposable bottles of water** at the front of your top refrigerator shelf, and make sure they’ve all been used before the day is over.

3. **After every bathroom trip, fill a glass** with water and drink it. Most people average 6-8 bathroom trips each day.

4. **Use a free smartphone app** (iPhone / Android) to track how many ounces/glasses of water you’ve consumed.

5. **Eat more cucumbers, zucchini, watermelon, and grapefruit.** All four of those are over 90% water by volume, so they’re a great way to implement more water into your day.
6. **Drink more tea.** I’m partial to Pique because of their filtration process, but even standard black tea can offer plenty of water with a spark of taste. Bonus with green tea in particular: it contains catechins that help reduce inflammation in the mouth, which is incredible for the oral microbiome.

7. **Get salty.** Some of the snacks I like to recommend for healthy teeth are also great for reminding you to drink water. Healthy salty snacks like salted almonds, organic jerky, and homemade kale chips will keep you a little thirstier and help you reach your goals.

**Reset Together Tip:** Comment on at least one person’s post in the Facebook group.
DAY 6

Eating for a healthy microbiome (from top to bottom) involves one important key to start: kicking the sugar addiction.

An unhealthy oral microbiome is full of pathogenic bacteria that love to eat SUGAR.

And I’m not just talking about the candy we threw out back on Day 2 — I’m also talking about all the carbohydrates that are almost instantly converted to sugar in your mouth.

(Isn’t it fascinating that cancer, diabetes, heart disease, autoimmune disease and brain disease are all big fans of sugar, too?)

But I’m not just here to tell you what to give up — I’m here to help you know what to do instead.

Microbiome Reset Step 6:
Write out a simple meal plan for next week (Monday-Sunday).

There are a lot of delicious foods that support a healthy oral microbiome.

If you saw the words “meal plan” and freaked out, it’s okay — remember, it’s not hard. I’m here to make it simple and straightforward.

Find my 7-day meal plan that’s super oral biome-friendly and easy to follow — just click on the button below. It also includes a full list of oral biome-friendly foods that you can use on your shopping trip tomorrow!

[Download Meal Plan + Food List]

*** Items marked with a check mark (✔️) link to our exclusive recipe. Some of these recipes are specific to this program and are password-protected. The password for these is: omr (must be in all lowercase).

The cool part is that you don’t have to follow this plan exactly — you can make all sorts of substitutions of other items with the other foods included on this plan. It’s all up to you and your specific tastes.
After my full meal plan, you’ll also see a blank page you can print out (or fill out electronically) with the meal plan you choose to follow.

PRO TIP: If you know you’re going to eat out for any of next week’s meals, look up the menu online, choose what you’ll eat, and add it to your meal plan in the appropriate slot.

Reset Together Tip: Post at least one day of your meal plan in the Facebook group.
DAY 7

You’re at the end of week 1 of your Oral Microbiome Reset!

So far, you’ve:

- Committed to sticking to every single step in this process
- Put aside snacks, desserts, and other sugar-heavy foods and drinks that can disrupt your oral biome
- Thrown out antibacterial, biome-busting dental products
- Scheduled your next dental appointment
- Started drinking 64 ounces of water every day
- Charted out your 7-day meal plan

That’s a lot of really incredible steps!

Microbiome Reset Step 7: Go shopping.

Now that you’ve gotten rid of some of the worst offenders in your pantry, it’s time to replace them with biome-friendly choices.

Using the meal plan you created yesterday, create a shopping list and head to the store for this week’s groceries.

Reset Together Tip: Choose at least one food you’re not as familiar with, put it in your shopping cart, and share the photo in the Facebook group.
DAY 8

Good morning!

Today’s step is really easy. (It is Monday, after all!)

**Microbiome Reset Step 8:**
Floss just one tooth, starting today.

We’ll talk about flossing more in week 3, but flossing is the only way to get in between teeth where your toothbrush can’t reach.

Many people have apprehension about flossing, so my advice is to begin by flossing just one tooth, if that’s you. (Of course, if it’s not you, the step for today is to floss every tooth!)

Your oral bacteria are constantly feeding and excreting, just like all living things.

When they excrete (yes, it’s their version of pooping!) on places between your teeth that you’re not disorganizing when you brush, it’s much easier for them to congregate in a small space and wreak havoc.

Developing a flossing habit is vital to manage the oral microbiome, particularly if you haven’t been eating all microbiome-friendly foods.

Don’t get me wrong — I am a big fan of the occasional slice of pizza or cake.

While I rarely indulge this way, I still floss every single day to disorganize bacteria in hard-to-reach areas.

I’ve never encouraged patients to choose to be 100% “clean” or “perfect” in their eating habits.

That’s unrealistic, and with how drastically different people are, there’s no truly “perfect” way to eat every single day.

Instead, I teach them (and now, you) how to combat any potential issues from a more sugary or acidic meal. Flossing is one great example of this.

And, let’s be honest...Anyone can floss just one tooth. Start with this today and through the end of this reset, and you’ll find that flossing every tooth, every day, becomes a breeze.

**Reset Together Tip:** Post about your FAVORITE and LEAST FAVORITE parts of this Reset so far.
When it comes to the oral microbiome, it’s not a matter of calories in what you consume, but how the actual nutrients in your food and drinks interact with microorganisms in the mouth.

Since I’m not expecting anyone to ditch desserts or bread for every day the rest of his or her life...It’s important to explain how to make sure those “cheat foods” (or “flex foods,” as I prefer to call them) don’t lead to bacterial overgrowth.

Remember when we talked about water and saliva as buffers to regularly disorganize the microbiome?

You can use these to your advantage.

If you’re going to drink a soda, for instance — after this reset is over, of course! — it’s best to drink it over 20-30 minutes at most, then swish water in your mouth to add a buffer.

For the best results, wait another 30-45 minutes, then brush your teeth.

The worst thing you can do is eat or drink super sugary snacks over a long period of time. Bacteria on oral surfaces need time to cause damage.

**Microbiome Reset Step 9:** Every time you eat today, swish with water afterwards, then spit it out.

Is this habit vital today?

No. You’re eating foods that don’t require as much “buffer” for your oral microbiome to stay in sync.

Will this habit be important in a few weeks?

You bet.

**Reset Together Tip:** Tell the Facebook group about something unexpected you’ve learned so far.
Over the years, I’ve developed a few really exciting recipes that I return to over and over. I’ve really enjoyed perfecting those recipes and having them professionally photographed to capture the mouthwatering moment just before the first bite.

Today, I’m sharing some of my favorites, including several I’ve never published publicly.

Microbiome Reset Step 10: Choose at least one of the below recipes to make before the end of the 28-day reset.
Reset Together Tip: Post a recipe of something YOU love to make in the Facebook group!
DAY 11

There are some foods and “antinutrients” that are bad for your oral microbiome all the time because they actively promote dysbiosis:

- Processed sugars
- Hard candies
- Some non-nutritive sweeteners, including aspartame, sucralose, and mannitol
- Refined grains (white bread, rice, etc.)
- Processed/most boxed foods (yes, even the ones labeled “organic”)

But there are other things that can actually provide overall health benefits to the body, but might be problematic for the mouth because they’re high in natural sugars or very acidic:

- Honey
- Organic maple syrup
- Coffee
- Whole grains, including whole grain bread or pasta
- Kombucha
- Antioxidant-rich dried fruits
- Freshly squeezed fruit juice
- Citrus fruits
- Some fermented foods (like pickles)

When it comes to foods on either of those lists, swishing with water and then brushing 45 minutes later is an easy, effective habit.

**Microbiome Reset Step 11: 45 minutes after every meal, brush your teeth.**

Because you’re sticking to only foods and beverages that are good for your oral microbiome, this isn’t a necessary habit today (unless you’re downing a lot of coffee).

**But 18 days from now, it may be. That’s why it’s important to start now.**

This is especially important if anything on the lists above are on your “must-have” list. Remember, even if it’s healthy for your body, it might not be great for your oral microbiome.
Frequently Asked Questions about Brushing After Meals

Q: Why do I say to wait 45 minutes, instead of brushing right away?
A: If you brush immediately after a meal where you consumed sugary or starchy foods, your toothbrush may dig the crystallizing structures into your enamel. This can cause tiny microabrasions that allow bacteria to congregate. This delay allows your saliva (and water you drink) to break down the compounds enough to avoid this damage.

Q: Are you seriously telling me to take toothpaste to work?
A: Not at all! I probably use toothbrush less than half of the times I brush each day. You don’t need it, particularly if you’re brushing in the middle of the day to disorganize bacteria after a particular meal. It’s far easier to brush with just water during these times.

Q: Should I use mouthwash, too?
A: Nope, mouthwash doesn’t really do much in the way of disorganizing your oral bacteria. Some DIY and natural versions are great for reducing inflammation, but I recommend using those in your morning and/or evening routines.

**Reset Together Tip:** Try brushing without toothpaste, and share your experience with the group.
Today, I want to share something important that may not seem related to your oral microbiome at first glance...but that can play a big role in your oral health.

There are three nutrients that work together in the body to direct calcium to the right places in your teeth and bones. Those nutrients are vitamins A, D3, and K2.

Most people get enough vitamin A in their diet, but it’s really common to be deficient in both vitamins D3 and K2.

Okay...So what does this have to do with your oral microbiome?

A few things:

1. Vitamin K2 deficiency is associated with many of the same chronic diseases as a dysbiotic oral microbiome.

2. If you take calcium supplements because you’re at risk for osteoporosis, a lack of vitamin K2 may contribute to the development of heart disease (which is also linked to problems the oral microbiome).

3. Lacking D3 and K2 makes you much more susceptible to tooth decay, even if you’re doing everything else “right” with your diet. Your oral microbiome has to work that much harder to prevent the spread of decay before it leads to infection.

4. Vitamin K2 deficiency may be caused after frequent antibiotic use, which will limit the function of the microbiomes through your entire body.

Here’s the kicker: Vitamin K2 is converted from K1 in the gastrointestinal tract. The problem here is that human beings don’t have the enzyme every other mammal has that completes this process.

In cows, pigs, goats, and any other kind of mammal you can think of, eating chlorophyll-rich grass activates an enzyme that helps complete this conversion.

But you don’t have that enzyme — so if you’re not eating grass-fed proteins that have K2, the likelihood is that you don’t get enough.

And since it’s activated by chlorophyll, conventional meat of animals who feed on only grain don’t provide much, either.

**Microbiome Reset Step 12:** Switch to grass-fed proteins (meat, cheese, and eggs) — preferably, forever.
Yes, it’s going to cost more than buying farmed meat, eggs, and dairy. Yes, it may mean working a little harder during your grocery trips. Yes, this will limit the brands you can buy.

*But it’s a lot less expensive than treatment for the problems a K2 deficiency can cause.*

*It’s a lot easier than struggling to make the trip from your car to the front of the grocery store.*

*And it’s far less limiting than the long-term consequences of NOT doing it.*

(I know that’s heavy, but this is a big deal that a lot of practitioners just aren’t talking about.)

**So, what can you do to offset the challenges this could introduce?**

1. **Figure out which grocery stores near you** offer the most consistent, low prices on organic meats. Trader Joe’s is great for this, as are Aldi and even Walmart.

2. **Shop the farmer’s market.** Although these prices may not be a lot different, you can support local businesses this way. And you may find that farmer’s market prices actually are significantly better than what’s at the store!

3. **Stock up and freeze.** When it comes to meat products in particular, buying in bulk is often the way to go to save. If you’re able to freeze what you get, you can drive down the per-pound price significantly.

4. **Buy it online.** Vendors like 5 Bar Beef and ButcherBox offer varying ways to order grass-fed meat straight to your door, whether in bulk or not. I’ve personally used ButcherBox and been happy with the results, and it does take quite a bit of hassle out of the process.

5. **Take a supplement with K2.** I’m not one to pretend that a capsule can cure all your ills, but if you’re concerned about K2 deficiency (particularly as you get older), a high-quality vitamin K2 supplement can help. My favorite K2-only supplement is *Relentless Improvement*, and for a multivitamin, *Ritual Prenatal*. (Yes, I know it’s a prenatal supplement, but it’s got everything you could ask for to build healthy teeth in a multivitamin, seriously.)

**Reset Together Tip:**

Do you have any hacks for getting grass-fed meat for less? Share them with us in the Facebook group!
This weekend, keep up with these new habits you’ve been creating. Keep a checklist for yourself.

Are you:

- Drinking 64 ounces of water every day?
- Flossing, even if it’s just a few teeth?
- Avoiding foods you know harm your oral microbiome?
- Sticking to your meal plan?
- Swishing with water after every meal?
- Brushing your teeth 45 minutes after you eat?

Steps 13 and 14 are simply to stick with these new habits all weekend.

Further Reading:

Vitamin K2 and the Calcium Paradox, by Kate Rhéaume-Bleue, BSc, ND

Vitamin K2 Benefits for Dental Health — AsktheDentist.com

Reduction of vitamin K2 concentrations in human liver associated with the use of broad spectrum antimicrobials.
We're halfway there!

Years ago, I wrote an article about why Paleolithic people don’t need dental checkups, but modern people do.

The basic premise was that they ate only what was good for the oral microbiome, so they didn’t need cleanings — or toothbrushes.

That doesn’t apply to modern people, though, for several reasons:

1. Our diets are drastically different than Paleolithic people.
2. Even if you follow a strict Paleo diet, modern farming has depleted nutrients in the soil and produce you eat to the point you won’t be getting the same level of nutrition.
3. Modern sleep forces a lot of people to sleep with their mouths open, drying out the mouth and causing bacterial overgrowth.
4. Modern hygiene and antibiotics have helped us prevent many sorts of death from infectious diseases. However, these have also changed the makeup of our microbiomes over time.
5. Realistically, the modern person will probably have a sugary or high-starch treat every once in awhile.

This is what brings me to today’s step, and what we'll be talking about a lot this week!

**Microbiome Reset Step 15: Start your new morning dental hygiene routine.**

If that feels like a big deal, remember you’ve already been doing a lot of it: brushing and flossing, to be exact!

Here’s what you need for this routine:

• Floss
• A toothbrush (any kind will do)
• Toothpaste (this is optional, but I recommend Hyperbiotics probiotics toothpaste when starting a microbiome reset)
• A tongue scraper
• Coconut oil or MCT oil
• Chewable oral probiotics (also optional, but I highly recommend the Hyperbiotics brand especially as you get started)
Here’s what this new, 5-step morning routine looks like:

1. **Floss between all your teeth.** While I’ve historically said there probably wasn’t a “correct” order to brush or floss, it does seem that flossing first is the right choice to fight plaque buildup.

2. **Brush your teeth in the morning, before bed, and 45 minutes after every meal.** It’s important to brush for at least 2 minutes, focusing on each quadrant for a minimum of 30 seconds. Many electric toothbrushes include this feature built-in, but if you’re using a toothbrush that doesn’t, you can use the free app Brush DJ (iPhone / Android) and brush to the song of your choice with a visual timer.

3. **Scrape your tongue.** Using a tongue scraper is a great way to sweep away the concentration of bacteria in one often-missed area: the tongue. Hold the ends of the scraper and start near the back of the tongue, scraping to the front.

4. **Swish with coconut or MCT oil for 60 seconds.** Do this in place of your mouthwash routine, especially if you have any inflammation in your mouth (seen in symptoms like bleeding gums). Make sure to spit the oil out in the trash can if you use regular coconut oil, as it can harden in the pipes.

5. **Chew one serving of oral probiotics.** These oral-biome specific strains of bacteria help to crowd out the bad stuff and keep the disease-fighting bacteria growing strong. Hyperbiotics’ research even shows that using their oral probiotics might help drive down your risk for sinus infections and colds!

All together, this should take you less than 5 minutes in the morning.

**And you have 5 minutes, right?**

In addition to brushing after every meal, you’ll also brush your teeth again once at night. It’s not required, but it may also be a good idea to chew another oral probiotic at night so it can work while you sleep.

**Reset Together Tip:** Feeling overwhelmed or not sure you have the time or energy to keep up with all the steps? Share how your journey is going with the group.

**Further Reading:**

*Heal Your Oral Microbiome* by Cass Nelson-Dooley, MS — pp. 127-128

The effect of toothbrushing and flossing sequence on interdental plaque reduction and fluoride retention: A randomized controlled clinical trial.

I’m pretty sure you understand at this point why it’s important not to use products that kill off all your oral bacteria.

That’s why I want to talk today about the two things I add to my morning dental hygiene routine that encourage the right kind of bacterial balance: oil pulling and oral probiotics.

**Oil Pulling**

The practice of oil pulling is about 3,000 years old.

If you follow Ayurvedic medicine, you may have heard that this practice might cure up to 30 different diseases.

*I think oil pulling is a healthy part of dental hygiene, but I don’t see the science that proves it cures systemic diseases.*

On the other hand, it’s a great way to reduce inflammation in the mouth and get rid of some problematic pathogenic bacteria.

Several studies have found that coconut oil reduces plaque buildup responsible for cavities and gingivitis.

Coconut oil pulling can even reduce oral thrush symptoms and bad breath by getting a handle on fungi and bacteria.

**Oral Probiotics**

Similar to probiotics you take for the gut, oral probiotic supplements provide specific strains of live bacteria that are known to fight disease and crowd out the pathogenic bacteria present.

There are several proven benefits of oral probiotics in scientific research, although the field is still pretty new.

Some of the strains found exclusively in oral probiotics include *L. reuteri* and *S. salivarius* K12.

**By using oral probiotics, you may be able to:**

- Decrease plaque buildup
- Get rid of bad breath
- Reduce your risk for cavities
- Improve gingivitis symptoms
- Increase the overall diversity of your oral microbiome
- Prevent pathogenic bacteria associated with cavities and gum disease from congregating in one place
Microbiome Reset Step 16: Write down the 5 steps in your new routine, plus 1 sentence to remind yourself why you’re doing this, and post it on your mirror.

It’s easy to get lost in busy days and drop habits you once committed to.

One way you can avoid “falling off the wagon,” even after this reset, is to make sure you remember a) what to do and b) why you’re doing it.

Just as a reminder, here’s the 5-step morning routine you began yesterday:

1. Floss every tooth
2. Brush for 2 minutes
3. Scrape your tongue
4. Swish with coconut oil for 1 minute
5. Chew an oral probiotic

Your 1-sentence reminder can be anything you like, but here are some examples from patients I’ve worked with in the past:

I’m tired of being in pain every time I eat or drink.

I don’t want to end up like my _____ (mom, sister, cousin, uncle) and get _____ (fill in the disease), so I’m going to do something about it.

My health is too important to ignore.

I don’t want to be another statistic.

My _____ (daughter, son, partner, mom, dad) deserves to have me around as long as possible.

I’m going to take the steps NOW to save money on costly dental bills LATER.

Whatever your reason is...you are worth the effort of making these changes permanent.
Reset Together Tip: Snap a photo of your Post-It or slip of paper and share it with the Facebook group.

In health,
Dr. B

Further Reading:
The Ultimate Guide to Oil Pulling: Benefits, How-To, and Everything Else You Need to Know — AsktheDentist.com

Benefits of Oral Probiotics for Bad Breath, Gum Disease, and More — AsktheDentist.com
Do you ever go back to the basics?

When it comes to your dental hygiene, brushing and flossing are two easy “basics” to get wrong. Or, in some cases, just plain lazy.

In fact, at MY last dental cleaning, I found out I’d been missing one spot on the back of my bottom row of teeth while brushing, letting plaque build up.

I’ve been a dentist for awhile, so that wasn’t my proudest moment.

Fortunately, it brought me back to those basics. I switched to a “smart” toothbrush that’s been warning me when I miss a spot and just generally have been paying more attention to how I brush.

And you don’t need a smart toothbrush — you’ve got a dentist! (That’s me.)

First, check out these videos I made that explain the proper way to brush and floss:

How to Brush Your Teeth the Right Way

How to Floss Your Teeth the Right Way
I think today’s challenge will be fun…

**Microbiome Reset Step 17:** Choose one (brushing or flossing) and take a short video of your technique. Then, post it in the Facebook group for me to give you advice on how you can tweak it.

We're doing this together, right?

Sometimes, all it takes is a bit of community and some helpful feedback to greatly improve the basics.

Not comfortable sharing with the group? You can also email your video to me at mark@askthedentist.com or DM me on Instagram using @askthedentist.

**Reset Together Tip:** Comment on at least one person’s video with an encouraging note or GIF.
We’ve talked a few times about why being able to spot problematic ingredients in dental care products is a big deal for the oral biome.

The wrong ingredients can actually make problems worse that they’re marketed to solve, like bad breath, cavities, or gingivitis.

Over the years, this has prompted me to create several DIY recipes for better dental hygiene, including toothpastes, mouth rinses, and oil pulling chews.

Not everyone is into the DIY life, which is why some of the products you’re getting to test out this week are my pre-made favorites.

But let’s look at what ingredients you should always avoid:

- **Triclosan**: As we talked about in Week 1, triclosan is an antibacterial ingredient found most often in toothpaste. It torches your bacterial environment and belongs nowhere near your mouth.

- **Tertiary amine**: Another antibacterial ingredient, this is actually found in some dentist-recommended brands!

- **Sodium lauryl sulfate**: This foaming agent in many toothpastes is linked to canker sores for many people because of the way it dries the mouth. This ingredient may also be labeled as “coco fatty alcohol sulfate”.

- **Artificial colorings**: Aside from their connections with autism, artificial food colorings have been known to cause cytotoxic and genotoxic effects on healthy cells in the body. These destructive effects have far-reaching impact. (And let’s be honest, toothpaste really doesn’t NEED to be blue.)

- **Titanium dioxide**: Data on this toothpaste ingredient is conflicting, and there’s never been research to show whether or not this is absorbed by the mouth or if it interacts with bacteria. There are concerns about what inhaling this can do to your organs, though. It only makes toothpaste white, so there’s no real reason to include this in your routine.

- **Alcohol**: The “burn” of Listerine isn’t good for you; it dries out the mouth and contributes to a dysbiotic oral microbiome. Keep an eye out for any ingredient including alcohol, including benzyl alcohol.

- **Parabens**: Anything that ends in the word “paraben” is a definite no-go. Exposure has been linked to hormonal problems, inflammation, and reproductive issues. There’s some evidence they can increase the risk of cancer (although this would be from parabens across all products, including cosmetics and many other beauty products).

- **Aroma/artificial flavors/fragrance**: Depending on the product, any of these could be thousands of different ingredients. Many of the options for these “hidden” ingredients are phthalates, parabens, and other problematic chemicals that may interact with the oral microbiome.
There are also two ingredients I’m not so sure about, but it’s next to impossible to find a toothpaste without them:

- **Glycerin:** While it’s not a toxic ingredient, the taste-supporting glycerin may have a slightly negative impact on remineralization. It’s not significant in the way that sugar is, but the way it coats the teeth and impacts the biofilm could potentially cause problems with the oral biome.

- **Essential oils:** Many essential oils are highly antibacterial, which is one reason I prefer to create DIYs for myself without these compounds. There is evidence for some essential oils that they are “selectively” bactericidal, meaning they have a way of finding pathogenic bacteria and killing only those. But there’s been no research done on their true impact on the oral microbiome, so I personally avoid them in my dental care most of the time, just to be safe.

In the cases of the final two, there are basically no non-toxic toothpastes or mouth rinses free of both glycerin and essential oils.

So, what can you do if you want to get these out of your life entirely?

DIY it, of course.

**Microbiome Reset Step 18:** Save this image to your mobile device so you can always refer to it when picking out dental products.
I thought it would be a bit much to ask you to DIY a new product in the midst of all these other changes. However, even if you’re not a DIY-er, you can still reference that graphic and pick better products.

But if you’re into DIY-ing...Why not try one of the recipes I shared above?

**Reset Together Tip:** Tell us what’s been easiest — or hardest — to say goodbye to during this reset.

Further Reading:

- Is triclosan in Colgate Total safe? — AsktheDentist.com
- Do certain toothpastes cause canker sores? — AsktheDentist.com
- TITANIUM DIOXIDE — EWG’s Skin Deep Database
- Genetic Damage Induced by a Food Coloring Dye (Sunset Yellow) on Meristematic Cells of *Brassica campestris L.*
  Dwivedi, K., & Kumar, G. (2015). Genetic damage induced by a food coloring dye (sunset yellow) on meristematic cells of Brassica campestris L. *Journal of environmental and public health, 2015.*
Many problems from oral bacteria start when bacteria are able to congregate in the same place for a long period of time without being disorganized.

In fact, when I talk to patients about brushing, we talk specifically about how brushing is meant to disorganize bacteria. That's why it works.

**But there's one part of the mouth that often doesn't get the attention it deserves when it comes to bacteria — the tongue.**

Even if you’re brushing your tongue, chances are there’s a coated buildup there...Unless you’re scraping your tongue, of course.

**Part of this week’s new routine should involve scraping your tongue after you brush and floss.**

Does tongue scraping really do anything, though?

**YES! Research has found that tongue scraping on a daily basis:**

1. Effectively reduces the buildup of bacteria on the tongue, including *S. mutans*, a common cavity-causing bacteria
2. Gets rid of bad breath by disorganizing bacteria and eliminating volatile sulfur compounds that contribute to halitosis
3. Drastically reduces *H. pylori* concentration in the mouth
4. Improves your ability to taste food

**Microbiome Reset Step 19:** Try a simple exercise after tongue scraping to make sure your tongue posture is correct.

Several years ago, I learned from a good friend, Sarah Hornsby, how important tongue posture is to oral and overall health. She’s a myofunctional therapist and works with patients to improve breathing and tongue posture issues.

If you’ve developed poor tongue posture or have a tongue tie, your breathing (during the day and night), your digestion, and your oral health will suffer.

**But how do you know if there’s a problem?**
I like referring to Sarah’s graphic for exactly where your tongue should rest on a regular basis.

If your tongue does not rest as shown above, there’s a possibility you need to retrain those muscles and/or get a tongue tie corrected.

Noticing a problem with your tongue position? Sarah’s team offers free, online consultations to discuss myofunctional therapy and whether or not it may be a good fit for you. (You can contact her team HERE.)

If you’re having trouble gagging while you scrape your tongue, that’s a very normal experience. Here’s how to work on it:

1. If you’re only gagging when you try to scrape the back half of your tongue, start by scraping a few days at a position that doesn’t bother you. Then, slowly work your way back. (Pro tip: When you scrape, your tongue should be stuck out as far as possible — which not only helps you scrape effectively, but can also help to exercise those muscles.)

2. If the motion in general makes you gag, you may need to start with several days or even weeks brushing the tip of your tongue. When you feel comfortable, grab the tongue scraper and start with as far forward as you need, and work your way further back on the tongue over time. It’s okay if it takes even a couple of months!

3. If you can’t stick your tongue out very far or struggle to tongue scrape at all, you may have a tongue tie that needs released. My recommendation in these cases would be to contact Sarah’s team at Faceology.

**Reset Together Tip:** Pay attention to how foods taste today. Can you tell a difference since you started scraping your tongue? Share it with us!
Further Reading:

What You Need to Know About MyoFunctional Therapy — MyFaceology.com

Tongue Tie (Ankyloglossia): Diagnosis, Symptoms, Surgery, and More — AsktheDentist.com


Effectiveness of mechanical tongue cleaning on breath odour and tongue coating: a systematic review.

Tongue scraping for treating halitosis.

Detection of Helicobacter pylori colonization in dental plaques and tongue scrapings of patients with chronic gastritis.

Tongue scraping as a means of reducing oral mutans streptococci.

Impact of tongue cleansers on microbial load and taste.
This week, you’ve had the opportunity to try some of the products I think can be really beneficial to the health of your oral microbiome.

While none of these are the “only” option (you can also find something you love that’s not here!), the products below are the ones I’ve researched and personally used — and that I like best.

1. Toothpaste

Utilizing oral strains of probiotics, Hyperbiotics is a great, low-foam toothpaste to support the balance of good bacteria in your mouth.

For those more prone to cavities, I recommend a toothpaste with Ha, or “hydroxyapatite” (rather than fluoride). Boka has been a mainstay of my routine for over a year now, and its nano-Ha formulation is particularly great for preventing tooth sensitivity.

With the highest concentration of Ha in a toothpaste available on the US market right now, RiseWell can help to powerfully remineralize enamel.
2. Floss
RiseWell is also the first company to release a floss utilizing Ha — which is great, because it gets down into those in-between spots that toothbrushing can’t always reach.

3. Tongue Scraper
Like we discussed yesterday, disorganizing the bacteria on your tongue is one great way to avoid buildup in that forgotten place. Primal Life’s tongue scraper works great — plus, it looks beautiful on a bathroom counter.

4. Oral Probiotics
Similar to your gut, the oral microbiome can benefit from disease-fighting probiotic strains to help crowd out pathogenic bacteria. Both of Hyperbiotics’ oral probiotics contain bacteria that may not only help prevent dental/oral issues, but even reduce the frequency and severity of upper respiratory infections!

5. Other Supplements
Cod liver oil is rich in omega-3s that can help to reduce inflammation that could otherwise upset the microbiome.
Yes, it’s marketed as a prenatal — but Ritual’s prenatal is way more than that. I personally take it for a well-rounded oral microbiome supplement. It’s got many nutrients perfectly suited to the promotion of oral health, including:

- Omega-3s
- Vitamin K2
- Vitamin E
- Vitamin D3
- Methylated folate
- Iodine
- Iron
- Magnesium

CBD oil has many benefits, from promoting healthy levels of inflammation to supporting healthy gums. Most importantly, it’s not highly bactericidal to the mouth.

6. Oil Pulling

This MCT oil “mouthwash” adds just a touch of other health-centric ingredients for a pleasant oil pulling experience. Plus, you can spit it in the sink, rather than the trash!

If you want to oil pull but need it to be a little more convenient, try LiveCoco’s kit.
7. For Dry Mouth

Some conditions, medications, or habits can cause chronic dry mouth (either temporarily or permanently). In these situations, your mouth may need some help staying moist and creating saliva. That’s when Biotene comes in!

These “mints” use oral biome-friendly ingredients to encourage saliva production.

Microbiome Reset Step 20: Add reminders to your calendar for when you should replace your toothbrush.

One thing you won’t see above are toothbrush recommendations. I have plenty in this article about how to find the best toothbrush for you, but my advice always comes down to:

The best toothbrush for you is the one you’ll pick up and use.

That being said, any toothbrush can become problematic if not replaced regularly. Once a month is ideal, but every 3 months is acceptable, especially if you’re keeping a strict budget.

Why? Because a worn toothbrush can make tiny scratches on the surface of your teeth that allow bacteria to “hide” rather than be disorganized when you brush.

Today’s tip is very simple, but it plays into supporting a healthy oral microbiome.

So, figure out when the last time you bought a toothbrush or toothbrush head was, then add a reminder for sometime 1-3 months from that date. Add a “repeat” option, and voila! You’re done.

Reset Together Tip: Not sure if your brush is in need of an immediate replacement? Post a photo in the Facebook group and I’ll let you know!
I hope you’re having a restful weekend.

In fact, that’s a big part of today’s step!

This week, we’re going to be talking all about sleep — how it impacts your oral and overall health, the common issues that wreck your oral biome, and how to know if you’re sleeping well.

Microbiome Reset Step 21: Download the SnoreLab app and track your snoring tonight.

There are many ways to track your sleep, and I’ll be emailing some of my favorites to you later on in the week.

**However, the #1 way to recognize sleep issues is by finding out if you snore.**

That’s why SnoreLab (which has a free version available) is my first recommendation to patients and readers.

It records snoring during the night and can help you get a basic picture of your sleep quality.

**Plus, you can use it while your phone is in airplane mode, which reduces your EMF exposure.** I don’t sleep with my phone in my room unless I’m using an app like SnoreLab, and I’ll only sleep next to it in airplane mode.

---

**Reset Together Tip:** Post a screenshot of your results in the group (or via email).

Once you’ve seen the results from your first night with the app, you may know more than you expected about your sleep quality.

The **good** news is that we’re going to be talking about ways to improve your sleep quality all week.

Until then...
On a recent podcast interview, I told the host that sleep, perhaps more than even diet or dental hygiene, is the most important part of a healthy microbiome from head to toe. At first glance, they may not seem connected — so, let’s take a deeper look.

1. Healthy sleep is one major way your body “detoxes.”

I’m not talking about a detox like a juice cleanse — your body has multiple methods of detoxifying itself, including liver detoxification and the cellular process of autophagy. “Autophagy” comes from the Greek words Auto (self) and Phagein (to eat). As a way of “housekeeping,” all eukaryotic cells use this function to clear debris, damaged proteins, and dysfunctional organelles from inside cells, then recycle or dispose of them.

Eukaryotic cells are defined as those which “contain membrane-bound organelles, including a nucleus.” Bacteria are a different type of cell called prokaryotes, which don’t have a nucleus or a membrane-bound organelle.

If your eyes are glazing over a little, that’s okay! Here’s the first thing you need to remember:

**Autophagy is how the body “cleans itself” at a cellular level. This is a mechanism your body uses to heal itself and protect you from the development of illness and disease.**

And when it comes to autophagy, sleep is really important.

A 2016 study found that the hippocampus follows a rhythm of autophagy that syncs up with the circadian rhythm that tells the body when to sleep. However, sleep fragmentation interrupts this autophagic rhythm.

So here’s the second important thing to keep in mind:

**When your sleep is fragmented or poor quality, autophagy is limited and your cells are at a greater risk of falling prey to pathogenic bacteria, viruses, and/or fungi.**

This doesn’t just impact the rest of your body — the mouth is just as susceptible. That’s one way poor sleep can increase your risk of developing tooth decay, gum disease, and other problems.

2. Poor sleep is often accompanied by mouth breathing.

We’ll discuss mouth breathing more throughout this week, but many people who have poor quality sleep breathe through their mouths at night.

This dries out the mouth, which, as you already know, can lead to a large number of problems for oral health.

**A dry mouth leads to major dysbiosis in the mouth. In fact, I would postulate that a dry mouth might be even more problematic to your oral microbiome than a poor**
diet or bad dental hygiene routine.

3. Sleeping badly may increase your appetite and even affect your ability to eat healthy.

As we’ve already discovered, a sugar- and carbohydrate-rich Western diet can greatly contribute to oral dysbiosis.

It turns out that sleep might actually make it harder to eat well. A 2004 study over more than one thousand participants found that people who couldn’t sleep well had higher levels of the hunger hormones leptin and ghrelin and increased BMI compared to participants with healthy sleep.

Like everything else about the human body, it’s all interconnected.

And if you struggle to eat healthy, your oral (and gut) microbiome will suffer.

4. Around 80% of my patients had some form of sleep-disordered breathing, which increases overall disease risk.

That’s not a typo — in fact, it’s astounding to me how many people suffered from sleep-disordered breathing. Sleep apnea is the “most severe” of these issues, but all of them can limit the restorative quality of your sleep.

You don’t have to be male or overweight to have sleep apnea. And if you truly have sleep apnea, that means your risk is higher for:

- High blood pressure
- Cardiovascular disease
- Stroke
- Sleep bruxism (teeth grinding)
- Daytime sleepiness
- Motor vehicle accidents

If you can’t breathe properly at night, you’re limiting autophagy, breathing through your mouth, and generally robbing your body of its natural ability to stay healthy and functioning.

How might this play out over time? In a dysbiotic oral microbiome, of course.

Microbiome Reset Step 22: Start a sleep diary.

If it turns out you’ve got major sleep issues, it’s important to work with a sleep medicine dentist and/or sleep specialist to work them out.

But before you see any of these physicians, you’ll need at least 2 weeks worth of sleep diary entries.
Even if you don’t have a sleep disorder that warrants a trip to the doctor, a sleep diary is a great way to keep yourself accountable and aware of changes to your sleep.

And as you can see, this is an important part of maintaining a healthy microbiome.

**Here’s what a simple sleep diary should include:**

1. The times you go to bed and get up
2. Your eating and drinking patterns throughout that day
3. The level of physical activity you got that day
4. How many times you remember waking in the middle of the night
5. How you feel when you wake up

If you’re looking for a more detailed sleep diary (especially if you’re considering seeing a specialist), **here’s a great one** developed by the National Sleep Foundation.

We’ve only got 6 days left in this Reset, but I encourage you to keep up with your sleep diary well beyond that!

**Reset Together Tip:** Do you have any “hacks” that always help you sleep better? Share them with the group!

**Further Reading:**

*Autophagy and aging: the importance of maintaining “clean” cells.*

*Circadian rhythm of autophagy proteins in hippocampus is blunted by sleep fragmentation.*

*Short Sleep Duration Is Associated with Reduced Leptin, Elevated Ghrelin, and Increased Body Mass Index*

*Epidemiology of obstructive sleep apnea: a population health perspective.*

*Sleep: How Much Do You Need? Sleep Deprivation, Remedies & More — AsktheDentist.com*

*Sleep Apnea: The Real Reason You Grind Your Teeth? — AsktheDentist.com*
If you’ve been around Ask the Dentist for long, you know what a fan I am of the habit of **mouth taping**.

What sounds like a very strange habit has literally revolutionized my own sleep quality. I’m astounded at the results, and I’ve heard very similar things from patients and friends of mine who have started this habit.

While there are studies on the way, only a few have been published on the benefits of mouth tape thus far. The most recent found that patients using mouth tape **snored and breathed less through the mouth — plus, it was useful in correcting mild sleep apnea!**

In general, mouth breathing is going to dry out the oral microbiome more than just about anything. So **many people** mouth breathe at night and don’t realize it.

Could you be mouth breathing? Well, do any of these sound familiar:

- Bad breath
- Cavities
- Gingivitis/gum disease
- Signs of bruxism (teeth grinding), like TMJ or worn-down teeth
- Daytime sleepiness
- Snoring
- Interrupted sleep (like waking up for bathroom breaks in the middle of the night)
- High blood pressure
- Fast resting heart rate
- Asthma

If so, you might be a nighttime mouth breather!

What’s more, many people have some form of disordered sleep breathing like obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) or upper airway resistance syndrome (UARS). This not only interrupts sleep but is fairly disastrous for the oral biome.

**Microbiome Reset Step 23:**

**Use mouth tape tonight.**

US participants in the Oral Microbiome Reset should have received their bonus box of **Somnifix Sleep Strips** already, which are my #1 choice for mouth taping.

If you’re not in the US, it’s still possible to mouth tape using a tape made for sensitive skin (Nexcare is my favorite, in these cases).
One of the hardest parts of mouth taping is getting it right so that it’s comfortable all night long. Here’s an easy step-by-step:

1. Make sure your lips are free of any balm/moisturizer, or the tape won’t be able to stick.
2. Rip off a piece of tape slightly wider than the size of your mouth (or, if you’re using Somnifix, remove the strip from the package and take off the layer covering the sticky side).
3. Relax your mouth so that your lips are touching, but not tight together.
4. Gently place the tape over your lips.

Gentle tape like Nexcare or Somnifix shouldn’t irritate the skin (particularly Somnifix, which was formulated with that very thing in mind). They’ll come apart easily if you try to pull your lips apart, which is why they don’t pose a danger of interrupting your breathing if your nose gets stuffed up.

I talk more about Somnifix and mouth breathing/mouth taping — and give a demonstration — in my video on YouTube (view it by clicking HERE).

**What if I can’t mouth tape?**

One of the reasons I like prescribing this easy remedy to my patients concerned about sleep quality is because it acts as a great diagnostic tool, too.

In general, you should be able to mouth tape without the tape coming off in the middle of the night after the first 2-3 days of following this habit.

**If you find that mouth tape won’t stay on overnight after several days, it’s a sign that something is amiss.**

Typically, this is either a sinus issue (allergies, a cold, etc.) that blocks your nose, OR it’s a signal that your airway is being blocked off in some way.

In these cases, I’d schedule an appointment with a dentist (preferably, one who deals with sleep concerns) to start the conversation about sleep-disordered breathing and airway blockages.

**Reset Together Tip:** Tell us about your first experience mouth taping. Did you love it? Hate it?

**Further Reading:**

Novel porous oral patches for patients with mild obstructive sleep apnea and mouth breathing: a pilot study.

**Mouth Taping: End Mouth Breathing for Better Sleep and a Healthier Mouth — AsktheDentist.com**
Dry mouth and disordered sleep breathing are among the topics I discuss most with both patients and readers.

While mouth taping is an excellent solution for many people, there are those who suffer from dry mouth beyond what’s caused by just open-mouth breathing at night.

**Many medications, medical conditions, and other factors make dry mouth worse.** And as I’ve already emphasized, a dry mouth is a mouth with an acidic pH, dysbiotic microbiome, and susceptibility to disease.

Let’s look at other reasons you might struggle with a dry mouth.

1. **You’re dehydrated.**

   We talked about this way back on Day 5 (are you still getting your 64 ounces each day?), but drinking enough water is the very first step to addressing dry mouth.

   Good hydration encourages saliva production, and saliva is a buffer in the mouth to keep bacteria from taking hold in one concentrated area.

2. **You’re mouth breathing throughout the day.**

   If you’re sitting down, take a moment to close your eyes and take in a deep breath.

   **Now, think about what you did—was that breath through your nose, or your mouth?**

   A lot of people, especially people who have to talk a lot for work, breathe through their mouths without ever realizing it.

   Mouth breathing is a major factor in dry mouth, but daytime mouth breathing is usually pretty simple to correct.

   **Throughout your day, pay attention to how you naturally breathe. Most of the time, you should be breathing through your nose, with your mouth closed.**

   Normal exceptions to this include sports or other physical activity, sinus blockages, and speaking.

3. **You have a medical condition.**

   Several conditions, including Sjogren’s syndrome or a deviated septum, can contribute to dry mouth.

   With Sjogren’s, the normal salivation process is interrupted. It’s difficult or impossible for patients with this condition to avoid dry mouth. To avoid cavities, they must take additional precautions to keep the mouth moist.
Even if you don’t have a condition that changes your salivation, other problems can cause more frequent mouth breathing.

Things that may contribute to mouth breathing include:

- A deviated septum
- Allergies (seasonal, indoor, or outdoor)
- Frequent sinus infections
- Nerve injury in the head or neck
- HIV/AIDS
- Diabetes
- Alzheimer’s disease
- Rheumatoid arthritis

Have any of those conditions?

Being able to breathe through the nose is a big deal for your body. I highly recommend working with your physician to take care of these conditions to open your airway, because a blocked airway will supersede other efforts to fix dry mouth.

4. You’re on medication.

Many common and uncommon drugs cause dry mouth as a side effect.

If you take any medicines on a regular basis, look up the side effects to see if it may be causing your dry mouth.

Drugs used to treat cancer, depression, high blood pressure, allergies, pain, and heartburn are all on the list.

Microbiome Reset Step 24: Focus on nose breathing all day today. Pay close attention to when you start breathing through your mouth so you can consciously change your habit.

Medications or medical conditions aren’t something you can fix in a day. You’ve already focused on hydration… So, what’s left?

Daytime mouth breathing is just as problematic as nighttime mouth breathing — but fortunately, it’s easier to fix.

Did you know that it’s even better to nose breathe while you work out? The additional nitric oxide production can enhance exercise performance and endurance.
Reset Together Tip: When you focus on your breathing, were you surprised? Did you mouth breathe more than you expected?

Further Reading:

Dry Mouth: Consequences, Causes, and Treatments — AsktheDentist.com
Several years ago, I wrote a book called *The 8-Hour Sleep Paradox*. I bring this up because, as we talk about sleep, it’s vital that you understand the importance of quality over quantity. I’ve worked with many patients on this very issue and consumed as much research as I can get my hands on, and it all brought me to the same conclusion.

Many people will tell you that getting 8 hours of sleep is all you need, but I disagree. The benefits of high quality sleep far outstrip those of a fitful, interrupted 8-hour night.

I talk a lot about this in my article on sleep [HERE](#) and my book [HERE](#). However, the point I want to get across today is that you must know that you’re getting good sleep in order to support the oral microbiome.

Good sleep supports the body’s cellular regeneration and renewal process known as “autophagy”. If that cleanup routine isn’t happening every night, the result is chronic inflammation, weight gain, irritability, increased risk for chronic disease...You name it, and sleep probably has something to do with it.

And every single item on that list is also intrinsically linked to oral microbiome health.

**Microbiome Reset Step 25:** Pick a sleep tracking method and commit to it for at least the next 2 weeks.

Sleep tracking methods differ in cost from free to several hundred dollars, so there's something for every budget. Don't feel as if you have to spend a lot to truly understand your sleep quality.

That being said, I’m going to walk you through the list of how to track your sleep, with my favorite coming first. (I’ll give a brief description here, but you can find the full review of each of these in the “Further Reading” section at the end of this email.)

**Today’s step is to choose one of these methods based on your own life, budget, and needs, and then stick to it beyond the end of this program. You can use the data you find to fill out your sleep diary for at least two weeks.**

Not sure this step is necessary? Tomorrow, we'll talk about the overwhelming number of people who deal with sleep apnea and nighttime bruxism and how this interacts with the oral microbiome.

Even if you think you’re sleeping well, it's worth tracking it to be certain.
1. Oura Ring

**What is it?** The Oura Ring is a wearable device that you can use both overnight and during the day.

**Cost:** Starts at $299

**Why I love it:** I’ve been using the Oura Ring for a few months straight, and it’s by far and away the best sleep tracking device I’ve ever tried. Unlike other wearable devices, it tracks not only heart rate and movement, but temperature as well.

Another thing I really enjoy when using the Oura Ring is that the companion smartphone app (available for both Android and Apple) sends regular reminders to make sure my sleep stays consistently on schedule. It provides advice and tips when it sees variations or fluctuations.

Lastly, because I avoid EMF exposure whenever possible, I love that the Oura Ring works without a Bluetooth connection. My phone sits outside of my bedroom, on airplane mode, while the Oura Ring stores my sleep activity overnight. In the morning, I take off the ring and allow it to sync with my phone.

2. Apple Watch (Series 3, 4, or 5)

**What is it?** Apple Watch is a smartwatch that integrates with the iPhone and other Apple products.

**Cost:** Starts at $199 for Series 3

**Why I love it:** While it’s true that the Apple Watch requires a third-party app to track your sleep, its heart rate monitor is among the best on the market. Because an app can allow both recording for snoring along with other physical markers of sleep quality, it’s still high on my list.

Like Oura Ring, you can use Apple Watch on airplane mode overnight while tracking your sleep, then sync the data in the morning.
3. SnoreLab

What is it? SnoreLab is an app that uses recording to track your snoring and sleep quality.

Cost: Free 3-day full trial, free to use with limited functions, $6.99/month for full version

Why I love it: We talked about this early in the week, but SnoreLab is my first choice for sleep tracking apps. First off, snoring is an incredibly common indicator of poor quality sleep that is overlooked a lot.

It also allows you to play ambient noise throughout the night, which has been shown to improve sleep quality for some people. Finally, it offers suggestions (similar to Oura Ring) for sleep improvement habits.

Download SnoreLab

Download SnoreLab

Apple

Android

4. SleepScore

What is it? SleepScore is an app that measures snoring and is compatible with some companion apps to get an overall picture of your sleep.

Cost: Free version with limited functionality, $5.99/month subscription for full version

Why I love it: Similar to SnoreLab, SleepScore records your snoring, offers ambient notes, and helps you improve sleep with easy steps. In addition, it can be used alongside wearable devices or a bedside monitor and has a great alarm feature. SleepScore is even backed by studies about its efficacy!

Why isn’t this one higher on my list? For one, it’s not compatible with Android phone except for Samsung models. I also prefer a much more minimalistic approach when possible, and SleepScore is a little too complex for my preference.

Download SleepScore

Download SleepScore

Apple

Android

Reset Together Tip: For those of you who have a few days of data from SnoreLab, share with the group what you’ve learned about your sleep habits.
One quick Google search will likely reveal billions of pages with advice designed to help you sleep better.

Many of these options may work great. Others are little more than a scam.

Even if you’ve addressed mouth breathing at night, having good sleep habits (which I like to call “sleep hygiene”) is a long-term way to support your oral health. And the best part? None of them require the drastic measure of taking sleep medications.

9 Ways to Sleep Better Forever

1. **Go to bed at the same time every night.** The circadian rhythm of the human body used to dictate when people went to bed and woke up. However, now that we’re constantly surrounded by clocks and lights, we artificially adjust our rhythm on a regular basis — often, to our detriment. Instead, focus on setting a bedtime and sticking to it (within 30 minutes) every single night.

2. **Ditch the blue light.** Screen time immediately before bed is a huge reason that many people struggle to sleep well. Set an alarm no less than 60 minutes before bedtime to remind yourself to put down the devices, turn off the TV, and allow your eyes to rest. You can also experiment with blue blocking glasses and e-readers with an electronic paper display.

3. **Create a sanctuary in your bedroom.** If you can help it, avoid having a TV, work desk, or other space in your room devoted to something that isn’t restful or that uses electronic lights.

4. **Keep the temperature down.** The target temperature for your room should be 66-68°F/19-20°C, which allows your body to sleep deeply.

5. **Don’t nap during the day.** Unless you’re following a split sleep pattern, which most people don’t, it’s not a great idea to nap during the day. The research isn’t clear yet, but for some people, napping can actually decrease nighttime sleep quality.

6. **Try mindful breathing and muscle relaxation before bed.** Whether you do this by more conventional forms of mindfulness, guided imagery, or just taking time to close your eyes and breathe deeply, these can help your body adjust to being at rest.

7. **Stop eating right before bed.** Particularly when eating carbohydrate-heavy meals, allow your body a few hours to digest food before you try falling asleep.

8. **Try a white noise app.** Different types of ambient noise have been scientifically shown to improve the quality of sleep. Fortunately, there are a lot to choose from, some of which are totally free.

9. **Use an air filter at night.** The air pollution inside your house can be as much as 100 times higher than outside. Toxins can wreak havoc on your oral microbiome, your sleep quality, and pretty much every part of your body.
Microbiome Reset Step 26: Choose a bedtime that is reasonable for you to achieve every night, and set a recurring alarm 60 minutes beforehand to put down the devices and turn off the TV.

If I had to pick one solitary thing that will improve sleep for most people across the board, it's sticking to a consistent schedule. Close behind that is avoiding blue light, especially right before bed.

Some of the other steps listed above may take time or even some investment to implement. However, these are easy to do right now.

Fortunately, once your oral (and gut) microbiome are healthy and properly diverse, even a few nights of bad sleep in a row won’t cause immediate damage.

But to get there, it’s going to take better quality sleep.

Reset Together Tip: Tell us what time you’ll be going to bed every night. Why did you choose that time?

Further Reading:


The Inside Story: A Guide to Indoor Air Quality — EPA.gov

I've heard many reasons why people avoid talking to a specialist about their sleep.

It costs too much.
I don't have time right now.
I'll get to it later.
It’s not a big deal; I’m young/healthy/feeling fine.
It’s inconvenient.
I’m sure I don’t have sleep apnea. I’m a woman and I’m not even overweight.
I can’t find a doctor.
I probably just need to cut down on my stress.
I can catch up on my sleep when work/family/projects slow down.

All of these can have a basis in truth, but the cost of not addressing potential sleep problems is a much bigger deal than any of the reasons above.

In fact, I would make an educated guess that following every other step in this program but skipping this one would mean you wasted your money. If you have undiagnosed sleep-disordered breathing, your diet and lifestyle can only do so much to support your oral (and gut) microbiome and protect you from infection or disease.

Around 80% of the patients in my practice suffered from some form of sleep-disordered breathing (SDB).

10-17% of men and 3-9% of women in the United States have sleep apnea.

According to estimates by researchers, a whopping 90% of people with sleep breathing interruptions are totally unaware of their problem.

Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA) or Upper Airway Resistance Syndrome (UARS) are both sleep-disordered breathing conditions that can happen to anyone. You don’t have to be male, middle-aged, or overweight to have either of these conditions.

Problems sleeping at night create far-reaching consequences, as we’ve discussed, from dysbiosis of the microbiomes throughout the body to TMJ and even broken tooth.

Today, I want to focus specifically on what to do to spot signs of sleep-disordered breathing and what to do about it.

1. Talk to your dentist.

Back on Day 4, you scheduled an appointment with your dentist. Did s/he mention signs of grinding? If you’re not sure, call the office and confirm whether or not signs of bruxism were noted.

Knowing if you’re bruxing for sure is one major sign of sleep-disordered breathing, but it could also be caused by other factors. You can learn more about the causes of bruxism in my article listed in the “Further Reading” section below.
2. Assess your sleep.

Whether it’s with data from your chosen sleep app or device, or just from your sleep diary and experience mouth taping, take a cold, hard look at the quality of your sleep.

This is important to assess after adjusting your “sleep hygiene,” like we talked about yesterday.

If you experience any of these regularly and have been practicing good sleep hygiene for at least a few weeks, it may be a sign that your sleep quality is suffering:

- Bathroom breaks in the middle of the night
- Snoring
- Waking up tired
- Trouble falling asleep
- Falling asleep too fast (this is called “short sleep latency” — if you fall asleep in less than 10 minutes, it’s actually not a good sign)
- Daytime sleepiness
- TMJ
- Inability to use mouth tape (meaning it falls off during the night)

3. Get a referral.

Sleep hygiene measures haven’t worked. Your assessments reveal a concern with the quality of your sleep.

So, what do you do?

At this point, it’s time to get a referral from your general practitioner to a sleep specialist.

That sleep specialist will schedule a sleep study (in a clinic or at home) and take note of your sleep quality, particularly the number of times you stop breathing through the night (defined as the apnea-hypopnea index, or AHI).


Treatments for sleep apnea and UARS vary by person, which is why it’s important to work with both your dentist and general practitioner for the full answer.

Some of the treatments you may be prescribed include:

- **Positional therapy:** For mild sleep apnea in people who sleep on the back, positional therapy is a simple treatment option that requires no extra equipment. Essentially, you simply need to stop sleeping on your back and shift to your side. You can get biofeedback machines specifically made for this purpose, or just DIY it by wearing
a backpack or fastening a tennis ball to your back. And surprisingly, this treatment is very effective!

- **Night guard**: This custom mouthguard is the first-line treatment (often, the only treatment) that the majority of dentists prescribe for symptoms of grinding. However, a night guard only protects your teeth from breakage and does nothing to actually adjust airway position, so it’s only a short-term solution at best — at worst, it could make your airway more closed off.

- **Mandibular advancement device (MAD)**: A MAD is a custom-fitted appliance, like the night guard, but with significantly more functional benefit. It actually helps reposition the mandible so that your airway may become more open and prevent breathing interrupts at night.

- **Tongue retention device (TRD)**: Significantly less expensive than a night guard or MAD, a TRD positions the tongue to a more optimal position and may help those who experience breathing interrupts due to tongue position. It’s not a custom product and can be bought without a dentist, but I would recommend talking to your dental provider before beginning its use. I’ve tried Good Morning Snore’s TRD and it worked very well!

- **CPAP/APAP**: Many people shrink away at the idea of an obnoxious breathing machine, but if you need a CPAP machine, using it could literally change your life. Both of these exert positive airway pressure during the night and prevent apneas (interrupted breathing) from occurring.

- **Myofunctional therapy**: As discussed on Day 19, myofunctional therapy primarily deals with tongue posture and sleep. A 2015 meta-analysis revealed that this non drug therapy can reduce the AHI in adults by 50% and in children by up to 62%. (For a free consultation with my recommended myofunctional therapy team, click HERE.)

- **Lifestyle changes and weight management**: Cutting down on alcohol, kicking cigarettes to the curb, addressing allergies, and losing weight may all help reduce the severity of sleep apnea.

- **Surgery**: The two types of surgery you may undergo to improve sleep apnea would be airway obstruction removal, like tonsil/adenoid removal or repair of a deviated septum, or UPPP (uvulopalatopharyngoplasty). Unfortunately, UPPP surgery has only about a 50% success rate and typically still requires a patient to use a CPAP or APAP machine, so this is typically a last-ditch effort to correct sleep apnea.

---

**Microbiome Reset Step 27:** Ask your dentist if you show signs of grinding your teeth.

As the first sign of sleep-disordered breathing, bruxism must be addressed in order to maintain a healthy oral microbiome.

If you’ve recently visited your dentist, call to find out if signs of grinding were noted during your exam. If your visit is still to come, add this to your list of questions to ask before leaving the office.
Reset Together Tip: Have you struggled with bruxism in the past? If you’re willing, share your experience with the group.

Further Reading:


Risk Factors for Sleep Bruxism in the General Population

Bruxism (Teeth Grinding): Types, Causes, and Treatments — AsktheDentist.com

Home Sleep Study: What to Expect + Alternatives — AsktheDentist.com

Increased Prevalence of Sleep-Disordered Breathing in Adults

Could You Have Sleep Apnea - Without Knowing It? — Cleveland Clinic

Do you need a night guard for grinding? — AsktheDentist.com

The Effect of Body Position on Physiological Factors that Contribute to Obstructive Sleep Apnea

Sleep bruxism related to obstructive sleep apnea: The effect of continuous positive airway pressure

Myofunctional Therapy to Treat Obstructive Sleep Apnea: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis

Clinical Guideline for the Evaluation, Management and Long-term Care of Obstructive Sleep Apnea in Adults
DAY 28

You have successfully arrived at the last day of this microbiome reset. Congratulations!

My hope is that this program has served your health, not only for these 4 short weeks, but for the rest of your life.

Yes, you can take a “flex” day now. Enjoy a dessert! Share a drink with friends.

However, don’t let the information you learned here fall to the side as life goes back to normal.

For a healthy oral microbiome for decades into your future, here’s 5 things to keep in mind:

1. **Don’t skip dental appointments.** Regular cleanings are important, not just for biofilm management, but for early intervention if problems were to arise. The buildup of tartar on teeth will continually contribute to a dysbiotic oral microbiome unless it’s regularly removed.

2. **Focus on your diet.** Many of the changes you’ve recently made can be a challenge if they’re new to you. However, they’re worth implementing on a regular basis. Research shows us that nutrient-dense fruits and veggies, organic animal proteins, healthy fats, and plenty of water all lead to a healthier overall life. It’s okay to enjoy refined carbohydrates on occasion, but limit your intake of foods like breads, pasta, and crackers to more of an occasional, whole-grain delight.

3. **Remember when to buffer a “flex” meal.** After a sugary, high-carbohydrate, or acidic meal, don’t forget to rinse your mouth with water and then brush about 45 minutes later. This super simple habit will do wonders protecting the health of your oral biome and preventing oral infection and disease.

4. **When it comes to dental hygiene, stick to the good stuff.** We talked a lot about what “the good stuff” is, but in general, remember that brushing and flossing are your #1 priorities. Next after that, I recommend tongue scraping and oil pulling when possible. Toothpaste and mouthwash are always optional, and you should only use varieties of these that aren’t designed to wipe out your oral bacteria.

5. **Don’t ignore your sleep.** Even if you’re sleeping like a baby these days, sleep is far too important to ignore, especially because it can change drastically as you age. Maintain good sleep hygiene and periodically track your sleep to note any major changes.

**Microbiome Reset Step 28:** Talk to someone about keeping you accountable.

One of the best things I’ve done for my health is asked for accountability. Whether it’s a good buddy, a partner/spouse, or professional like a personal trainer or dietician, asking someone to keep you accountable can make or break life-changing accomplishments like what you’ve just achieved.
So before the end of today, decide who the right person is for you and ask them to partner with you in staying on track with your health and wellness goals.

Not sure if you have a person in your life suited to the task? Use reminders on your phone, or ask in the Facebook group! The purpose of this group is to build like-minded community to work on improving oral and overall health, and we’d love to be there for you as life gets back to “normal”.

**Reset Together Tip:** Share with the group the transformation you’ve experienced in the last 4 weeks.

In the coming week, I’ll send one more email for this program that includes your downloadable guide of all the information discussed in this Reset program. Keep an eye out!

To your good health...