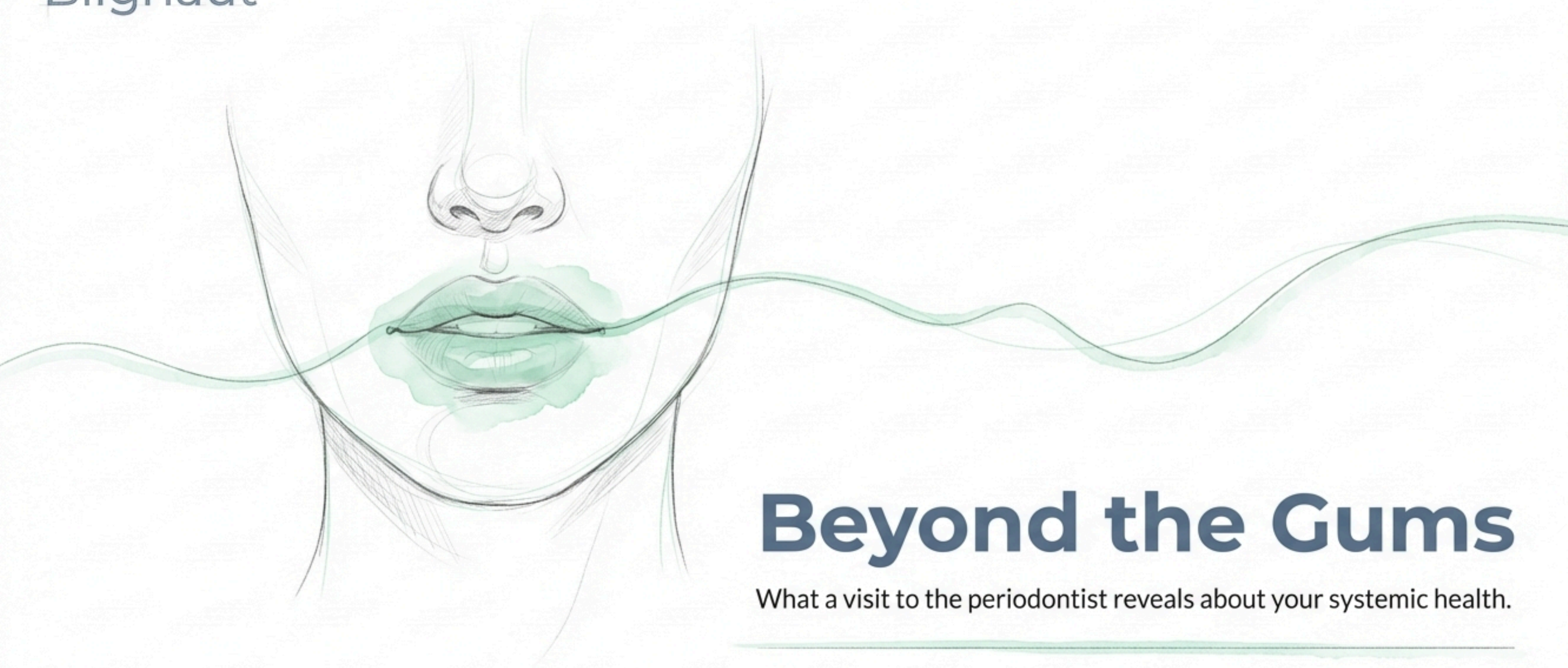


Dr. Christa  
Blignaut



# Beyond the Gums

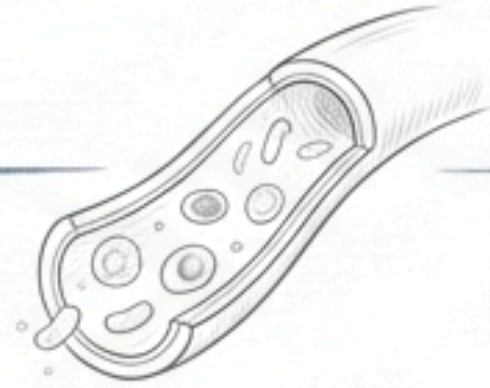
What a visit to the periodontist reveals about your systemic health.

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Dr. Christa Blignaut, BChD, MChD | Periodontist & Oral Medicine Specialist

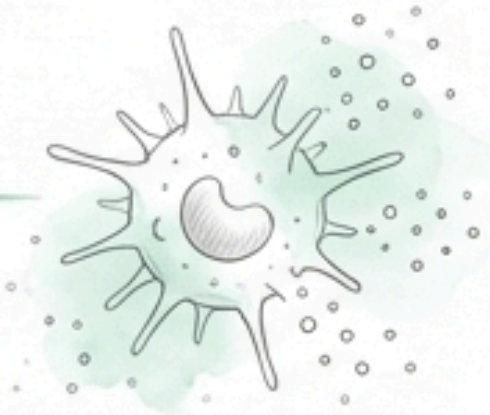
# The Mouth as a Biological Window

Your periodontist reads the health of your entire body.  
We look for three types of clues:



## 1. The Bacterial Highway

Pathogens physically migrating from the mouth into the bloodstream.



## 2. The Inflammation Engine

Localized gum infection triggering a full-body immune response.

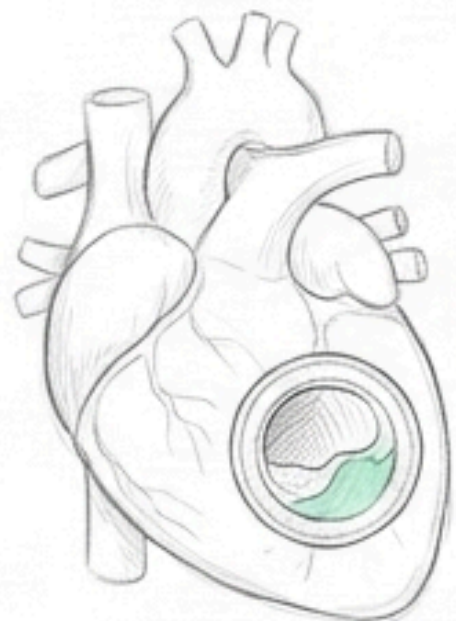


## 3. The Physical Canvas

Subtle changes in tissue color, bone density, and enamel revealing silent systemic conditions.

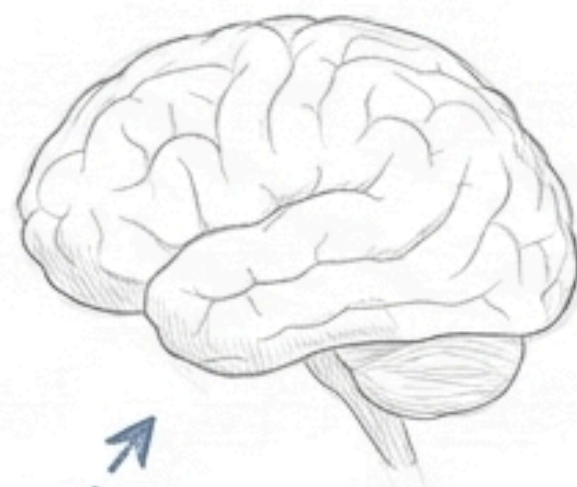
# The Bacterial Highway: Heart & Brain

The Culprit: *Porphyromonas gingivalis* & *Streptococcus mutans*



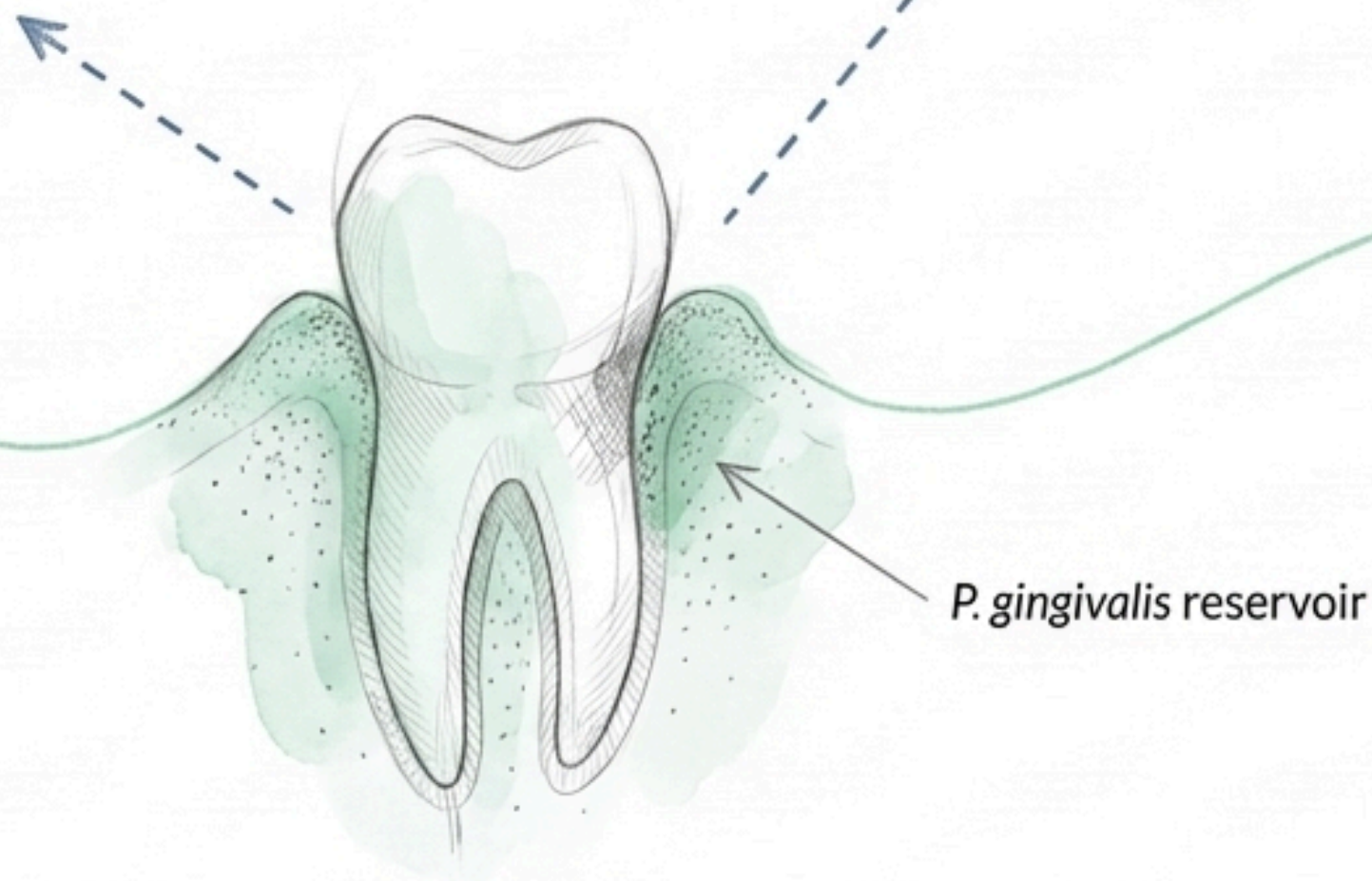
## Cardiovascular Disease

Bacteria from bleeding gums enter the bloodstream, invading endothelial cells and contributing directly to arterial plaque (atheromas).



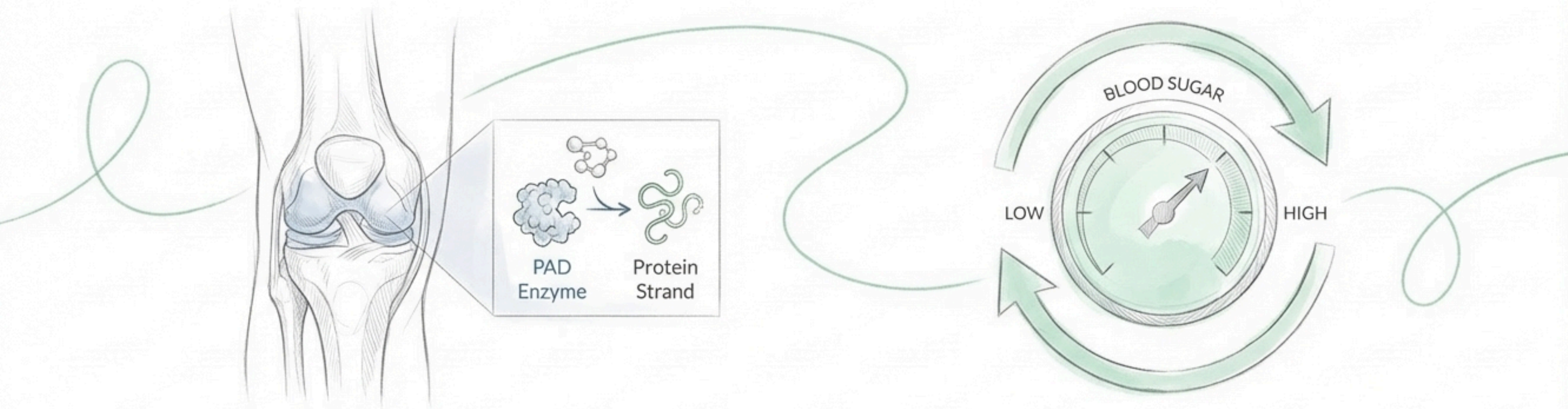
## Alzheimer's Disease

Recent clinical findings detect these exact oral pathogens in the brains of Alzheimer's patients, driving neuroinflammation and activating destructive microglia.



*P. gingivalis* reservoir

# The Inflammation Engine: Joints & Metabolism



## Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA)

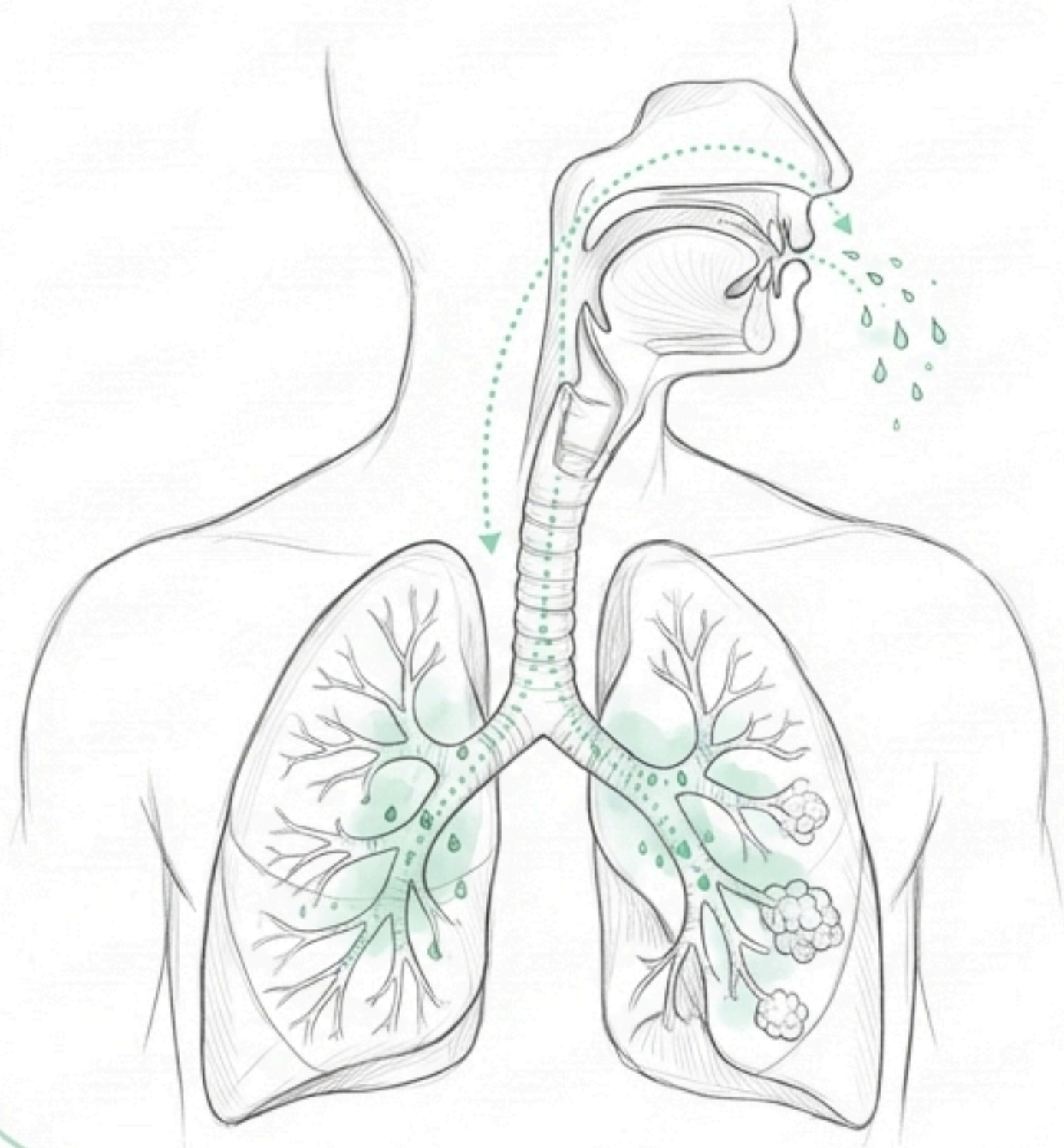
Periodontal bacteria express the PAD enzyme, altering host proteins. This triggers the body to produce autoantibodies (anti-CCP), directing the immune system to attack its own joints.

## Diabetes: A Bidirectional Trap

High blood sugar severely worsens gum disease. In return, severe gum inflammation elevates IL-1 $\beta$  and TNF- $\alpha$ , causing systemic insulin resistance and making glycemic control nearly impossible.

# The Aspiration Pathway: Respiratory Health

The Mechanism: Dental plaque acts as a breeding reservoir for respiratory pathogens. Through silent micro-aspiration, these bacteria are inhaled directly into the lungs.



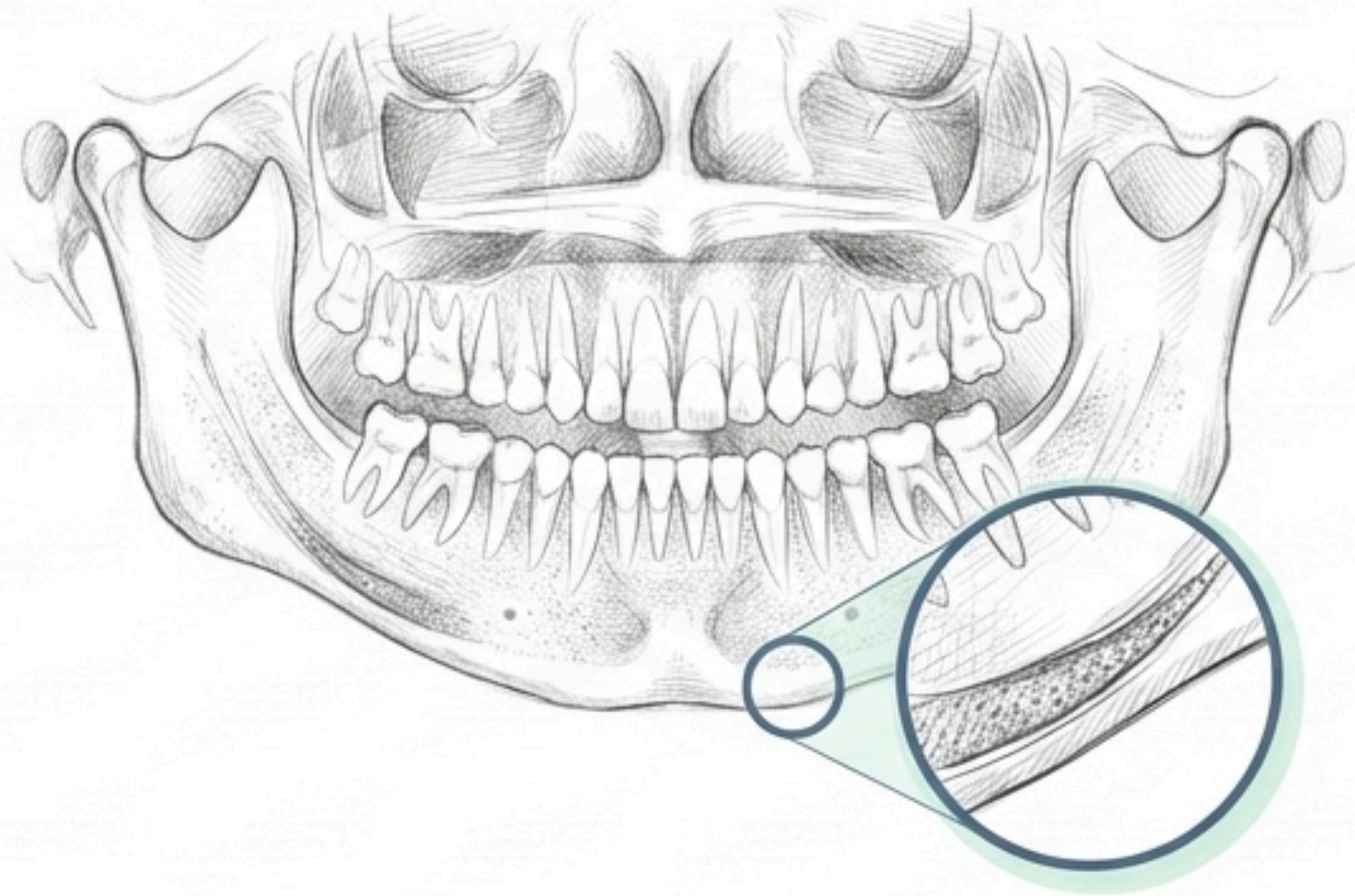
## Pneumonia & COPD

Directly linked to an increased frequency of severe COPD exacerbations and hospital-acquired pneumonia in vulnerable populations.

## COVID-19 Complications

Patients with deep periodontal pockets (Stage 3 & 4) suffer significantly higher rates of severe COVID-19 complications. Elevated oral protease activity facilitates viral cellular entry.

# Structural Clues: Bone Density & Digestive Health



## Osteoporosis Detection

Routine panoramic dental X-rays can reveal early thinning of the Mandibular Cortical Width (MCW). This serves as a highly accurate early warning sign for systemic skeletal bone mineral density loss.



## Gastrointestinal & Eating Disorders Gastrointestinal & Eating Disorders

Erosive Tooth Wear (ETW) on the non-chewing surfaces of teeth acts as an immediate red flag for silent acid reflux (GORD) or eating disorders such as bulimia, prompting early medical intervention.

# The Tissue Canvas: Hidden Conditions



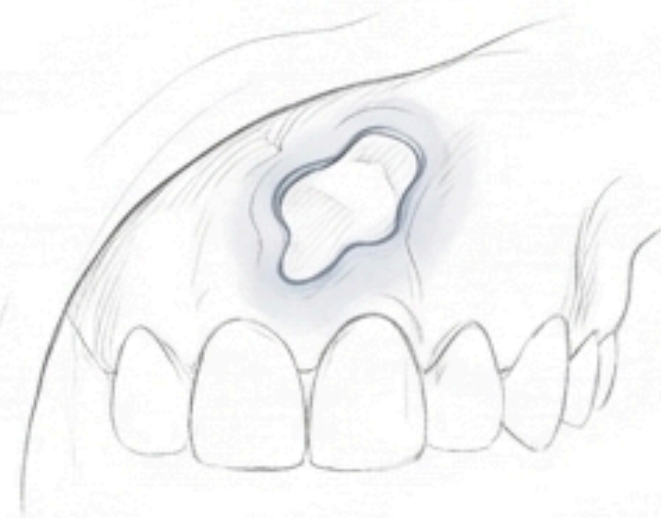
## Acute Leukemia

Unexplained, painless, pale-blue gingival enlargement with a glazed texture.



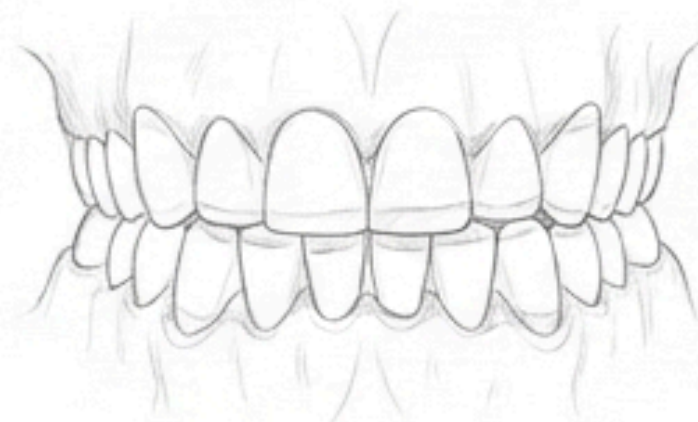
## Anemia

Noticeably whiter or paler than normal mucosal tissues, indicating poor iron absorption.



## Autoimmune Disorders

Persistent, non-healing oral ulcers frequently pointing to Lupus, Crohn's disease, or Sjögren's syndrome.



## Psychological Stress

Severe clenching and grinding wear (bruxism) revealing highly internalized psychological stress.

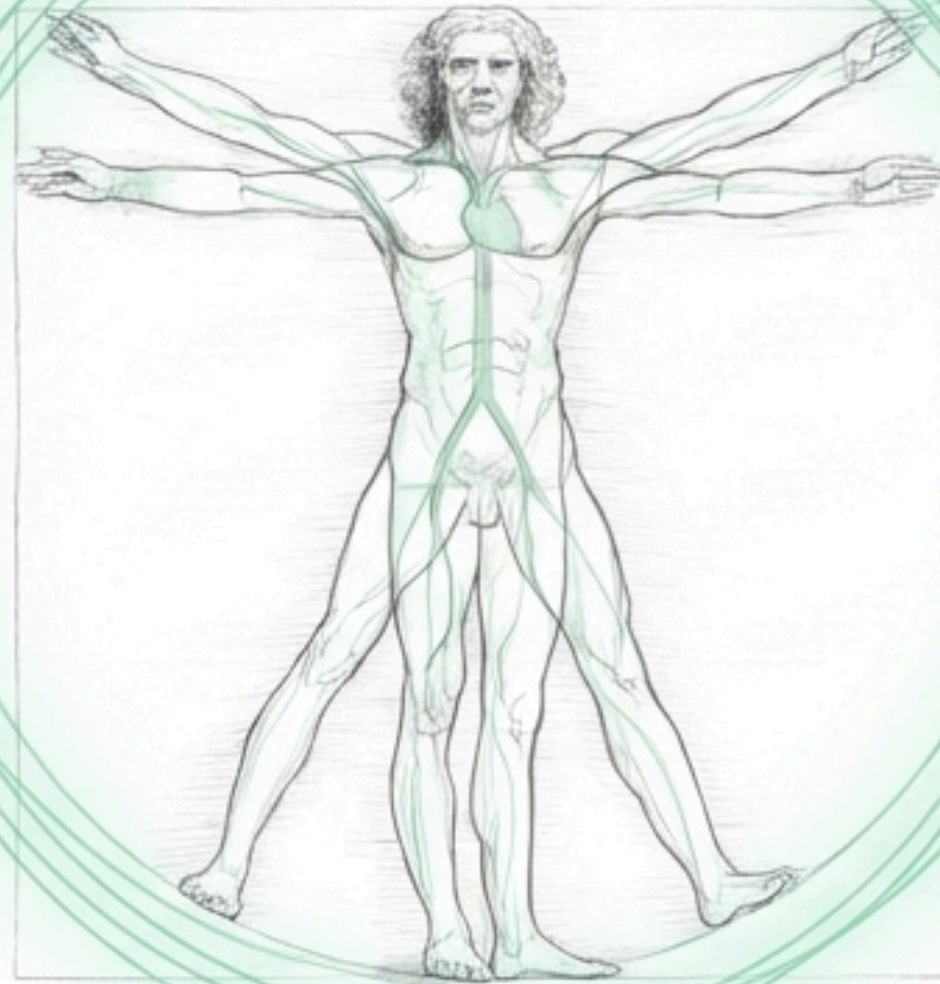
# The Oral-Systemic Diagnostic Matrix

Clinical Sign (What we see)	Suspected Systemic Link	Next Step (Action)
Deep Periodontal Pockets	High Cardiovascular / Diabetes / Respiratory Risk	Deep Clean + Medical Referral
Erosive Enamel Wear (ETW)	GORD / Eating Disorder	Enamel Protection + GI Referral
Mandibular Cortical Thinning	Osteoporosis	DEXA Scan Referral
Spontaneous Bleeding / Pale Enlargement	Acute Leukemia / Anemia	Immediate Blood Panel / Biopsy

# Treat the Gums, Protect the Body

## The Ultimate Shield

Periodontal therapy is systemic healthcare.



## The Medical Reality

Eradicating oral infection physically lowers your body's C-Reactive Protein (CRP) and Interleukin-6 (IL-6) levels.

## The Result

Treating your gums actively reduces systemic inflammation, decreases the burden on your heart, stabilizes blood sugar, and protects your joints and lungs.



Dr. Christa Blignaut

*Let your mouth tell us the whole story.*

Dr. Christa Blignaut | BChD, MChD  
Periodontist & Oral Medicine Specialist

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