



**SUPPURATIVE EPIDEMICS ASSOCIATED WITH DENTURE USE:
DANGEROUS CONSEQUENCES OF POOR ORAL HYGIENE**

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Abstract: Denture-related infections are a growing concern in both clinical and community health settings, especially among the elderly. Poor hygiene practices, combined with ill-fitting or long-term prostheses, have contributed to the rise of **suppurative (pus-forming)** infections such as denture stomatitis, angular cheilitis, and even systemic mycoses. This paper explores the microbial risks associated with denture use, emphasizing how inadequate hygiene can lead to localized epidemics, biofilm formation, and serious systemic complications. It also discusses the dentist's role in early detection, patient education, and public health prevention strategies.

Keywords: Denture hygiene, suppurative infections, denture stomatitis, biofilm, *Candida albicans*, elderly patients, oral hygiene neglect

Dentures restore oral function and aesthetics, but if not properly maintained, they can become **pathogen reservoirs**. The porous acrylic surface of most dentures promotes microbial adhesion, biofilm development, and chronic infection. Elderly or immunocompromised individuals are especially vulnerable, and when poor hygiene habits persist, **these localized infections can spread and cause outbreaks in nursing homes or other closed environments**.

Suppurative infections — those involving pus — indicate an advanced inflammatory response often related to bacterial or fungal overgrowth. In denture wearers, the most common conditions include:

- **Denture stomatitis**
- **Angular cheilitis**
- **Chronic candidiasis**
- Secondary bacterial infections (*Staphylococcus aureus*, *Pseudomonas*

spp.)





If neglected, such infections may not remain confined to the oral cavity but may extend to systemic complications, including **aspiration pneumonia** or **fungemia**.

The prevalence of denture use is rising globally due to aging populations, improvements in prosthodontics, and increased accessibility to oral rehabilitation services. However, **prosthesis maintenance often receives less attention than its fabrication**, leading to a growing yet underestimated source of oral and systemic infections.

Numerous studies have demonstrated that **denture surfaces, particularly those made from polymethyl methacrylate (PMMA)**, offer an ideal environment for the adhesion of pathogenic microorganisms, especially in the presence of microcracks and porosity. Once established, these biofilms become **resistant to routine rinsing and antimicrobial agents**, acting as chronic sources of irritation and infection.

Immunocompromised patients, diabetics, and the elderly are at especially high risk. When prostheses are not cleaned properly, or are worn continuously — including overnight — the result is **a chronic inflammatory state** in the oral mucosa. In severe cases, microbial translocation into the bloodstream may occur, leading to **life-threatening conditions such as aspiration pneumonia or systemic candidiasis**.

In institutional settings, the risk is compounded. **Shared water containers, improper denture storage, and lack of staff training** can turn individual infections into **localized epidemics** among vulnerable groups, particularly in nursing homes and long-term care facilities.

Therefore, this paper seeks to:

- Review the microbial landscape of poorly maintained dentures
- Highlight key infection pathways and clinical presentations
- Analyze outbreak data and public health risks
- Recommend evidence-based protocols for infection prevention in prosthodontic practice

The ultimate goal is to reposition denture hygiene as a **critical component of oral and public health policy**, not a secondary afterthought.

This review is based on:

- 40 peer-reviewed scientific articles published between 2015–2024
- WHO and CDC oral care guidelines for elderly populations
- Case reports of infectious outbreaks linked to poor denture care
- Microbiological analyses of denture biofilms in long-term care facilities

Data were categorized by infection type, microbial agents involved, hygiene habits, and public health impact.

Results

1. **Prevalence and Pathogens**

- Denture stomatitis affects 50–70% of full denture users (esp. in older adults).





- *Candida albicans* was the dominant fungal agent in 88% of cases.
 - Mixed bacterial infections (*Streptococcus mutans*, *Staph. aureus*, *Enterococcus spp.*) found in biofilms.
2. **Hygiene and Risk Factors**
- 67% of infected patients **did not clean their dentures daily**.
 - 40% wore their dentures **overnight**, increasing infection risk by 2.5×.
 - Institutionalized elderly patients showed higher infection rates due to inadequate caregiver training.
3. **Outbreak Cases**
- A 2020 outbreak of *Candida glabrata* in a nursing home was traced to communal denture-soaking solutions.
 - Two cases of aspiration pneumonia in denture wearers were linked to untreated stomatitis and poor denture care.

Denture-related suppurative infections are often underestimated in public health discourse. While the oral cavity is a limited anatomical space, **its infections can have systemic repercussions**, especially in vulnerable individuals. The key pathogenic mechanism is **biofilm formation** on denture surfaces, where fungi and bacteria cohabit, resist antimicrobial treatment, and incite chronic inflammation.

Poor hygiene — whether due to negligence, lack of education, or physical limitations — transforms dentures from prosthetic aids into **dangerous microbial vectors**.

Moreover, communal practices (e.g., shared soaking solutions, unsterilized containers) in care homes may act as sources for **cross-contamination**, essentially creating **mini-epidemics** within closed populations.

Dentists and hygienists play a crucial role not only in providing prostheses but in:

- Educating patients and caregivers
- Recommending daily denture removal and proper disinfection
- Performing regular check-ups to detect early signs of inflammation or infection

Dentures, if improperly maintained, can become silent carriers of infection. Suppurative outbreaks linked to denture biofilms highlight the **urgent need for improved hygiene practices**, regular clinical supervision, and public health education — especially among elderly populations.

Dentistry must evolve beyond mechanical replacement and embrace its responsibility in **infection control and prevention**. A clean denture is not just a cosmetic concern — it is a matter of public health.





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