

What kinds of bacteria make their home in your mouth?

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The study of the human microbiome — the booming and much-hyped quest to understand the microbes that share our bodies — began in the mouth. Specifically, it began with dental plaque...

Mouth microbes were largely ignored for the next two centuries, however, until an American dentist named Joseph Appleton took an interest in them. Compared to microbes in the gut or skin, those in the mouth were easier to collect and less vulnerable to oxygen. Between the 1920s and 1950s, Appleton and others catalogued these bacteria, and noted that how they were influenced by saliva, food, age, seasons, and diseases. Science historian Funke Sangodeyi notes that these efforts helped to turn dentistry — itself a marginalised part of medicine — into a true science rather than just a technical profession.

In 1999, another dentist scraped some plaque from one David Relman, [who then analysed the microbes within](#) it by shredding and sequencing their DNA. That technique is common now, but was groundbreaking then; it took the study of the microbiome to the next level by freeing scientists from the yoke of microscopy and laboratory cultures, and allowing them to more thoroughly identify the microscopic denizens of our bodies. Indeed, even though the mouth was the most well-studied of human microbial habitats, Relman found many new strains and species.

Read full, original post: [The Forest In Your Mouth](#)