

Dentistry

Are Your Teeth Breaking Your Heart?



By:
Lisa D. Haines,
D.M.D.

In maintaining overall health, both physically and emotionally, your mouth plays a major role. Did you know there is a connection between your teeth and heart? There has been continuing research that shows cardiovascular disease and periodontal disease, or gum disease, may go hand in hand.

Recent studies have shown that harmful bacteria from your mouth travels the body through the bloodstream. These may be damaging to your heart by contributing to clot formation.

The liver also reacts to the bacteria and makes CRP (c-reactive protein) which causes inflammation in arteries, leading to heart attack and stroke. With cardiovascular disease remaining the leading cause of death in women, it is essential to know the facts on prevention. Regular dental visits, as well as good oral hygiene at home, may be helping to keep your heart healthy.

It is estimated that nearly one out of every four woman ages 30-54 has gum disease, and that fifty percent of women over fifty-five have the disease. Let's repeat that...50%! With this enormous statistic, it is important that we have the knowledge to help ourselves be healthy women.

You may know gingivitis is an infection of the gum tissue causing redness and bleeding. It is reversible, but if not treated can lead to periodontal or gum disease. Periodontal disease is a chronic bacterial infection in the tissues around your teeth. These tissues support

your teeth, and it is vital that they be healthy to have a healthy smile. Some may experience only mild symptoms or even none at all, while others may have swollen, bleeding gums or bad breath.

Once you have been diagnosed with gum disease your dentist will recommend deep cleanings, or gum treatments, be done instead of simply a normal cleaning. A lot of patients can be confused about what this means to their oral health and the future of their oral health.

Tartar, or calculus, can build up beneath the gums to form a hardened plaque on the tooth. This creates an area to harbor bacteria. These bacteria produce toxins which irritate the gums and cause infection. Once this hardened plaque is formed, it is impossible to remove it by brushing and flossing. This is why deep cleanings are important. Your hygienist will be able to remove the tartar from below the gum line and flush the debris away; creating a

smooth surface that should no longer harbor the harmful bacteria. It is then important to keep regular visits with your hygienist. A maintenance program is vital to keeping your mouth healthy. If gum disease is caught early, it is much easier to treat.

To some it may come as a surprise to need more than just a cleaning, especially if you are not experiencing any symptoms. But there are a number of factors that play a part in developing periodontal disease. Smoking is the most significant risk factor. Genetics, diabetes, and

some medications can also increase your chance for gum disease. Stress can be a factor by making it harder for your body to fight off infection. If you brush twice a day and floss, yes floss, you are helping your whole body.

Make sure to ask your dentist not only about the health of your teeth, but about the health of your gums. If you have questions about your dental health or if it has been a while since your last dental visit, please feel welcome to call our office at (314)966-7778 to set up a free consultation.

Dr. Lisa Haines attended SIU School of Dental Medicine in Alton, IL. She is a member of the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry and can be reached at Contemporary Dental Arts in Kirkwood at (314) 966-7778.

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