

Oral Health

The Connection Between Oral and Overall Health

If the eyes are a window to the soul, it may be that the mouth is a window through which the general health of the body can be predicted.

Studies increasingly indicate that oral health is linked to one’s overall health and that people who practice good oral hygiene and maintain oral health have less chance for developing certain serious medical conditions, including cardiovascular disease.

There’s no getting around the fact that the human body is loaded with bacteria, and the mouth is by no means exempt. Regular tooth brushing and flossing, coupled with the body’s natural defense system, normally keep those bacteria under control. In the absence of proper oral hygiene, however, bacteria can thrive, resulting in tooth decay and gum disease.

Gum Disease

Researchers have found links between serious gum disease, called periodontitis, and cardiovascular disease, which includes heart attacks and strokes, and is the leading cause of death in the United States. Gum disease also is linked to a severe medical condition called endocarditis, which is an infection of the inner lining of the heart valves or chambers.

When gums bleed, bacteria found there can enter the bloodstream and travel to other parts of the body. In some cases, particularly with people who suffer from certain heart conditions, bacteria settle in the inner lining of the heart, resulting in endocarditis.

Recently, a study indicated that porphyromonas gingivalis, a bacterium known to be largely responsible for gum disease, may also be linked to Alzheimer’s disease. For women, periodontitis also can cause complications in pregnancy and birth and may contribute to low birth weight.

To complicate matters even more, certain diseases such as HIV/AIDS and diabetes can make it harder for the body to fight off infection, causing gum disease to worsen. Some medications, such as certain antidepressants, diuretics, painkillers, and decongestants, also can make you more susceptible to oral health problems, as they reduce saliva flow, which helps to remove food and bacteria.

Gum disease is widespread in the United States, with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reporting that nearly half of adults age 30 or older suffer from some form of the disorder. The good news, however, is that it is largely preventable with the practice of good oral hygiene, which includes brushing your teeth several times a day, using dental floss, maintaining a healthy diet and seeing a dentist regularly.

As we learn more about the connections between oral health and overall well-being, the case for education and working toward prevention is clear. Brushing and flossing should be part of your daily routine. For your health’s sake, consider it time well spent.

Coming This Month:

The Importance of Dental Visits

..... February 14th

Oral Cancer

..... February 21st

The Connection Between Nutrition and Oral Health

..... February 28th

Quarterly Education:

The ConnectCare3 Benefit

..... March

For assistance on your health and wellness journey, contact **ConnectCare3** at info@connectcare3.com or by calling **877-223-2350**.

ConnectCare3 is available to those on the health insurance plan. Talk to your benefit representative to see if your company is enrolled.



Mayo Clinic. "Oral health: a window to your overall health." June 4, 2019. Accessed at <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/dental/art-20047475>.
Harvard Health Publishing, Harvard Medical School. "Gum disease and heart disease: The common thread." March, 2018. Accessed at <https://www.health.harvard.edu/heart-health/gum-disease-and-heart-disease-the-common-thread>.
Healthline. "Yes, Gum Disease May Increase the Risk of Alzheimer's – But Don't Panic." Jan. 29, 2019. Accessed at <https://www.healthline.com/health-news/are-alzheimers-and-gum-disease-connected>