

## Oral Health Connection

### *Making the Oral Health, General Health Connection*

Studies continue to uncover new findings further confirming the link between oral health and general health. Periodontal (gum) disease can be associated with health problems found in other parts of the body. Check out these findings connecting oral diseases to overall health and well-being.

#### **Heart Problems**

According to the American Dental Association (ADA), there is a link between cardiovascular disease and gum disease. Individuals with gum disease run a higher risk of coronary artery disease (heart disease) and stroke. And the American Academy of Periodontology (AAP) has established that people with periodontal disease are almost twice as likely to have heart disease.

#### **Pregnancy Complications**

Pregnant women are more prone to gum disease due to hormonal changes that occur during pregnancy.

Women suffering from gum disease while pregnant are four to seven times more likely to deliver underweight and premature babies, according to the ADA. The more severe the disease, the more prematurely the mothers tend to deliver. During this time, it's especially important for women to practice good oral hygiene to lower their risk for complications.

#### **Cancer**

During preventive dental visits, a dentist can detect certain early warning signs of cancer. According to Cancer.org, dentists can often detect premalignant abnormalities and early stages of cancer in the oral cavity, including tongue, mouth, throat and lip. When caught in the early stages, these cancers are much more treatable and treatment options more varied, which is another reason regular dental checkups are important.

#### **Diabetes**

Studies have shown that patients diagnosed with gum disease are considered to be at high risk for diabetes and should be tested. It has also been shown that people who keep their diabetes under control have a much lower risk of gum disease than those who don't.<sup>1</sup>

Research has also shown the connection between diabetes and gum disease to run both ways. Diabetes has been known to harm other parts of the body, including the mouth. Because of lowered resistance and longer healing process, gum disease appears to be more frequent and more severe among those with diabetes, according to the AAP. Treating gum disease in people with diabetes can help improve blood sugar control.

**You can find more oral health tips by logging in to our online member portal at [DentalCarePlus.com](http://DentalCarePlus.com).**

**T H E P L U S I S S E R V I C E**

1. Casanova, L., F. J. Hughes, and P. M. Preshaw. "Diabetes and Periodontal Disease: A Two-way Relationship." *BDJ Br Dent J* 217.8 (2014): 433-37. Web.

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**Here are some simple tips from the ADA to keep your mouth healthy and reduce your risk of gum disease:**

- Visit your dentist for regular checkups (typically every six months).
- Brush your teeth twice a day with a soft-bristled toothbrush.
- Clean between your teeth once per day with floss or an interdental cleaner.
- Use dental products marked with the ADA Seal of Acceptance.
- Rinse your mouth with water or fluoridated mouthwash after eating or drinking.
- If you're a smoker, consider quitting. Smoking may increase your chances of gum disease, tooth decay and tooth loss.



**While gum disease can contribute to a number of health problems throughout the body, you are not defenseless. The best defense against gum disease is prevention.**