



HEART HEALTH

Does your oral health measure up to a happy heart?

Research is racing to help health care professionals further understand how periodontal disease may be linked to cardiovascular disease. The pressure is on to get a pulse on how improved periodontal health may positively impact patients with cardiovascular disease, the leading cause of death in the United States. Is your heart thumping yet? Relax, take a deep breath, size up this information and become the ruler of your oral *and* overall health.

You're probably aware that smoking, being overweight and having high cholesterol or high blood pressure levels can thwart a healthy body by putting you at increased risk for heart disease. But, you may not know that healthy gums play a vital role in maintaining a healthy body, too. For a long time, we've known that periodontal disease, a bacterial infection, may



contribute to infective endocarditis - a possibly fatal condition in which the interior lining of the heart and heart valves inflame due to bacterial buildup. As such, patients with a history of rheumatic fever, mitral valve prolapse or heart murmur often require antibiotics prior to dental procedures as a protective measure.

Today, researchers suspect that periodontal diseases may be linked to far

more than infective endocarditis, including the more common forms of heart disease that cause heart attack and stroke. Seem like a massive stretch? Well, normal tasks such as chewing or brushing can injure gum tissue and allow bacterial toxins to enter the bloodstream. Scientists now believe that these bacterial byproducts di-

rectly or indirectly cause an inflammation of the blood vessel wall, which results in blockage of an artery. This may be how your periodontal disease could lead to a heart attack.

Don't let this information flow on in "vein," because you or someone you know may be more at risk than you think. . . Patients with heart disease are clogging up hospitals, with more than 60 million Americans (one in four) having some form of the disease and nearly \$300 billion spent annually on health care and lost productivity. These statistics coupled with the fact that one in three U.S. adults aged 30 to 54 have some form of periodontal disease, and a startling 50 percent of adults aged 55 to 90, build up to a potentially big problem.

See a periodontist for a periodontal evaluation, and begin taking care of your oral health today. You'll be one beat closer to a happy heart and a healthy body! ♥

Medication That Makes Your Heart Happy Could Make Your Smile Sad

If you have been diagnosed with heart disease or high blood pressure, your physician may have prescribed a number of different medications, some of which may affect your periodontal health or put you at risk for periodontal disease. Some commonly prescribed medications can cause dry mouth, increased plaque

or enlarged gum tissue. These conditions frequently promote bacterial infections under the gum line, causing bleeding gums and bad breath. Please discuss any medications you are taking with your periodontist to

find out what effects, if any, they are having on your periodontal health. Your periodontist will work with you and your physician to minimize negative effects. Oftentimes just good oral hygiene and more frequent dental care is all you need to keep you smiling! ♥

The American Academy of Periodontology Patient Page is a public service of the AAP and should not be used as a substitute for the care and advice of your personal periodontist. There may be variations in treatment that your periodontist will recommend based on individual facts and circumstances. Call 1-800-FLOSS-EM for a free brochure on periodontal disease.

For more information visit www.perio.org