

What Happens in Your Mouth Doesn't Necessarily Stay in Your Mouth

Research has shown that there may be an association between periodontal disease and other chronic inflammatory conditions, such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes, among others. Scientists believe that inflammation may be the cause behind the link between periodontal disease and other chronic conditions. Inflammation, the body's reaction to fight off infection, guard against injury, or shield against irritation, initially intends to have a protective effect. Untreated chronic inflammation, on the other hand, can lead to the destruction of affected tissues, which can lead to more serious health conditions.

If you think or know you have one of the inflammatory conditions listed below, it is important to talk with both your physician and a dental health professional, such as a periodontist, to help reduce your risk of further disease progression. Dental professionals and medical professionals will often work together to manage their patients living with, or at risk for, the following diseases:

Cardiovascular Disease

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is one of the leading killers of men and women each year. Research has shown that inflammation is a major risk factor for developing CVD, and that people with periodontal disease may have an increased risk for CVD. Though more research is needed to better understand the connection between periodontal disease and CVD, don't be surprised if your periodontist asks you about your heart health or if your cardiologist or physician asks you about your periodontal health.

Diabetes

Periodontal disease can be a complication of diabetes. Researchers have found that people with poorly

controlled Type 2 diabetes are more likely to develop periodontal disease. However, the risk isn't just one way; people with periodontal disease may find it more difficult to control their blood sugar levels, which can increase the risk for diabetic complications. If you are living with diabetes, it is crucial that you pay close attention to your periodontal health.

Pregnancy Complications

Studies have shown that women with periodontal disease may be at an increased risk of pregnancy complications, such as delivering a preterm or low birth weight baby. More research is needed to determine the exact relationship, but expectant mothers should consider having a periodontal evaluation to ensure that their periodontal health is at its best.

Respiratory Diseases

Research has suggested that bacteria found in the mouth can be drawn into the respiratory tract and cause an inflammatory response in the lungs, commonly known as pneumonia. In addition, periodontal disease may also worsen existing chronic lung conditions. Anyone with lung or respiratory problems should consider a complete oral health examination to determine if gum disease is present.

Since periodontal disease has been shown to have a connection with other chronic diseases, you should try to keep your teeth and gums healthy. First, be sure to brush your teeth at least twice each day and floss your teeth at least once each day. Additionally, you should receive a comprehensive periodontal exam each year from your general dentist or your periodontist. Doing so can help ensure that your periodontal health is at its best, which can help keep your entire body healthy.



Gum Disease Found to be Underestimated in the US

According to a 2010 study by the American Academy of Periodontology (AAP) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the prevalence of periodontal disease in the United States may have been underestimated by as much as 50 percent. This means that more Americans may have periodontal disease than previously thought, and therefore may be more susceptible to other chronic inflammatory diseases such as CVD, diabetes, and respiratory diseases. If you think you may have periodontal disease, talk to a periodontist for more information.

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. Visit perio.org to assess your risk and for more information on periodontal disease.