

Oral Health and Overall Health

The connection between the oral cavity and the entire body is an important concept to grasp. It has been proven that oral diseases may contribute to many serious health conditions. Bacteria from diseased gums can travel via the blood stream or airways to infect other areas of the body.

Dental Hygiene and Overall Health

Prevention is the key to maintaining a healthy overall body. The hygienist can perform scaling procedures to remove the bacteria from the teeth and mouth to prevent gingivitis (gum disease) or periodontal disease. If the bacteria is left in the mouth it can enter the blood stream or airway and spread to other areas of the body. The hygienist will also review your medical history and have you fill out appropriate documentation and examine your mouth for any sores or lesions or early stages of oral cancer. He or she can also make recommendations for other health care professionals that may be consulted to help keep you healthy, for example a nutritionist or pharmacist.

Diseases/Medical Issues Related to Dental Hygiene

- Worsening of diabetes
- Increased chance of stroke or heart disease
- Increased chance of infective endocarditis
- Increased likelihood of low-birth weight in babies
- Abrasive tooth paste
- Heavy plaque build up
- Exacerbating respiratory conditions or infections

Heart Disease and Stroke and Oral Health

Up to 91% of patients with heart disease have periodontitis, compared to 66% of people with no heart disease. The bacteria in the mouth from diseased gums can enter the blood stream and cause inflammation and clogging of the blood vessels by plaque. If fatty plaque breaks off the lining of the blood vessels it can travel to the heart or brain causing a heart attack or stroke. Inflamed blood vessels decrease the amount of blood flow travelling from the heart to the rest of the body. This also raises blood pressure.

In addition, harmful microorganisms from the mouth can spread to the heart through the blood stream causing infection of the inner lining of the heart, also referred to as the endocardium.

Pregnancy and Oral Health

A mother with gum disease has a higher risk of having a premature or low birth weight baby due to bacteria in the mouth causing an inflammatory response. Babies that are pre-term or have low birth weight are at higher risk of developing some health conditions such as: ear infections, asthma, developmental and behavioral problems.

Respiratory Disorders and Oral Health

Respiratory disorders – the inhalation of harmful microorganism in the mouth into the lungs can cause infections such as pneumonia, bronchitis, emphysema and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease(COPD).

Diabetes and Oral Health

People who have gum infections have a harder time controlling their blood sugar levels. Alternatively, the higher the blood sugar levels the more at risk an individual is to tooth decay, gum disease, fungal infections, bacterial infections and dry mouth.

Sources:

Health Canada <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/pubs/oral-bucco/2009-smile-sourire/index-eng.php>

