

## ***LINKS BETWEEN PERIODONTAL DISEASE & GENERAL HEALTH***

---

If you have been told you have periodontal (gum) disease, you're not alone. An estimated 80% of adults currently have some form of the disease. Periodontal diseases range from simple inflammation to serious disease that results in major damage to the soft tissue and bone that support the teeth. In the worst cases, teeth and bone are lost.



### *What causes periodontal disease?*

Our mouths are full of bacteria. These bacteria along with mucus and other particles constantly form a sticky, colorless “plaque” on teeth. Brushing and flossing help get rid of plaque. Plaque that is not removed can harden and form bacteria harbouring “tartar” that brushing doesn't clean. Only a professional cleaning by a dentist or dental hygienist can remove tartar.

Gum disease is a threat to your oral health. Research is also pointing to possible health effects of periodontal disease that go well beyond your mouth. Whether it is stopped, slowed, or gets worse depends a great deal on how well you care for you teeth and gums every day.

### **Pregnancy & Periodontal Disease**

It's possible that if you have periodontal disease and are pregnant, you may be at risk for having a premature, low birth weight baby...



For a long time we've known that many risk factors contribute to mothers having babies that are born prematurely at a low birth weight - smoking, alcohol use, drug use and infections.

Now evidence is mounting that suggests a new risk factor - periodontal disease. Pregnant women who have periodontal disease may be seven times more likely to have a baby that is too early and too small.

Periodontal disease is an infection and all infections are cause for concern among pregnant women because they pose a risk to the healthy baby.

If you are planning to become pregnant or are at risk for periodontal disease be sure to include a periodontal evaluation with a dentist as part of your prenatal care – because healthy gums may lead to a healthier body!

## Diabetes & Periodontal Disease

The two-way relationship between periodontal disease and diabetes...

For years we've known that people with diabetes are most likely to have periodontal disease than people without diabetes.



Recently research has emerged suggesting that the relationship goes both ways – periodontal disease may make it more difficult for people who have diabetes to control their blood sugar.

More research is needed to confirm how periodontal disease can make it more difficult to control blood sugar. What we do know is that severe periodontal disease can increase blood sugar, contributing to increased periods of time when your body functions with high blood sugar. And, as a diabetic, you know that this puts you at increased risk for diabetic complications.

In other words, controlling your periodontal disease may help you control your diabetes.

If you are among the millions of Canadians who live with diabetes, or are at risk for periodontal disease, see a dentist for a periodontal evaluation – because healthy gums may lead a healthier body.

## Respiratory & Periodontal Disease

It's possible that if you have periodontal disease, you may be at risk for respiratory disease...



For a long time we've known that people who smoke, are elderly, or have other health problems that suppress the immune system, are at increased risk for the development of respiratory diseases like pneumonia, bronchitis, emphysema and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease.

Now growing research is beginning to suggest a new risk factor – periodontal disease. If you have periodontal disease, you may be at increased risk for respiratory disease. Infections in the mouth - like periodontal disease, are associated with increased respiratory infection.

If you are at risk for respiratory disease or periodontal disease see a dentist for a periodontal evaluation – because healthy gums may lead to a healthier body.

## Heart & Periodontal Disease



It's possible that if you have periodontal disease, you may be at risk for cardiovascular disease...

For a long time we've known that bacteria may affect the heart. Now evidence is mounting that suggests people with periodontal disease – a bacterial infection, may be more a risk for heart disease, and have nearly twice the risk of having a fatal heart attack, than patients without periodontal disease.

While more research is needed to understand how bacteria may affect your heart, one possibility is that periodontal bacteria enter the blood through inflamed gums and cause small blood clots that contribute to clogged arteries. Another possibility is that inflammation caused by periodontal disease contributes to the build up of fatty deposits inside heart arteries.

One out of every 5 adults has one or more types of heart disease. If you are one of these adults or if you are at risk for periodontal disease see a dentist for a periodontal evaluation – because healthy gums may lead to a healthier body!

Periodontal disease may also lead to infective endocarditis, which is an inflammation of the heart valves. This is why patients with artificial heart valves or mitral valve prolapse require antibiotics prior to any dental appointments that may produce bleeding.

## Joint Replacement and Periodontal Disease

For people with knee or hip replacements, periodontal disease can increase the risk of complications. Bacteria associated with periodontal disease can become lodged in the artificial joint and potentially cause joint failure. Again, this is why patients with recently placed artificial joints require antibiotics before dental treatment.

Sources:

“Healthy Mouth Healthy Body” Patient education pamphlet. American Dental Hygienist Association. 2003.

“Oral health matters from head to toe”. Canadian Dental Hygienist Association Website.