

## The Oral-Systemic Connection

**What is it?** We are starting to associate the mouth to the rest of the body. Oral health is systemic health. "It is all related." Researchers have discovered that there are serious links to an unhealthy mouth to diseases such as cardiovascular, diabetes, arthritis, dementia, respiratory and premature births. Periodontal disease is a major source of infection in the body. The bacteria infested biofilm associated with periodontal disease stimulates the body's response by causing a constant state of inflammation. In this inflammatory process, a substance known as the C-reactive protein (CRP) is released into the blood stream. The CRP can be detected with a blood test and elevated levels clearly demonstrates a greater risk for the systemic diseases listed above. The C-reactive protein is an active antigen which can cause clotting and ultimately, increases the risk of heart attack and stroke

Periodontal disease puts the body in a constant state of inflammation. This can impact a person's ability to process and use insulin. As a result, it can increase the person's blood sugar levels. If uncontrolled, it impairs the body's ability in healing. Therefore, good oral health promotes controlled diabetes. "Diabetes is bi-directional" With uncontrolled diabetes, patients are more prone to gingivitis, periodontist, xerostomia, and decay.

The bacteria associated with periodontal disease can be aspirated into the lungs and can cause respiratory infection or worsen a pre-existing lung condition. Remember, bacteria stimulates your body's immune response which can be taxing to your health leading to the mentioned ailments such as arthritis and premature births.

**What can you do?** Simple, pay attention to your entire health, starting with your mouth. If you have an unhealthy periodontium, you receive treatment from your dentist to remove the biofilm, and promote a stable state depending upon your severity of periodontal disease. Even your home care, such as brushing and flossing play a paramount role in your health. Studies have demonstrated by flossing every day the biofilm is removed between your teeth and therefore the levels of C-reactive protein are diminished. Sometimes, correcting the alignment of your teeth by orthodontics, replacing fillings and crowns will help the patient get access to difficult areas to clean.

Next, see your physician for yearly comprehensive check-ups to make sure you are healthy and do not need intervention. If you are diagnosed with any ailments please listen to your physician and follow their recommendations. Also, make sure you tell your dentist because it can affect your dental treatment.

Finally, make sure you have a healthy diet enriched with antioxidants and including vitamin C. The antioxidants help fight free radicals that prevent cell repair and vitamin C is involved in the healing process. Together, these supplements can enhance your immune defense, which affects your overall health.

Remember, periodontal disease is not only about saving your teeth it is about your overall health.

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