

The Importance of Oral Health

Oral health related not just to your teeth – but to your overall health head to toe. In fact, research has identified gum disease as a risk factor for heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, premature and low birth weight babies, and a number of other conditions.

Heart Disease: A major disease with an oral health connection is heart disease—the number one killer of men and women in the United State. Numerous research studies have shown a connection between heart disease and the bacteria involved in gum disease.

Diabetes: Another disease that has an important relationship to periodontal disease is diabetes—a serious, costly, and increasingly common chronic disease that affects 23.6 million people the United States and contributes to more than 200,000 deaths each year. Approximately 95 percent of Americans who have diabetes also have periodontal disease and research shows that people with periodontal disease have more difficulty controlling their blood sugar level. Severe periodontal disease also can increase the risk of developing diabetes.

Babies: Periodontal disease also has been linked to premature, low birth weight babies. Studies have found that expectant mothers with periodontal disease are up to seven times more likely to deliver premature, low birth weight babies.

Lung Disease: Oral infection also has been implicated in respiratory ailments. Bacteria in periodontal disease can travel from the mouth to the lungs and lower respiratory system, where it can aggravate respiratory conditions, particularly in patients who already have other diseases.

Other Connections: A routine oral health exam also can uncover signs and symptoms of osteoporosis and low bone mass, eating disorders (which can be detected by thin tooth enamel and a red mouth), and HIV, which often shows signs in the mouth first.

Oral Health Basics:

- **Brush your teeth at least twice a day.** Don't rush. Take enough time to do a thorough job.
- **Use the proper equipment.** Use a fluoride toothpaste and a soft-bristled toothbrush.
- **Practice good technique.** Brush the inside and chewing surfaces of your teeth, as well as your tongue.
- **Know when to replace your toothbrush.** Invest in a new toothbrush or a replacement head for your electric toothbrush every three to four months.
- **Floss every day.** You can't reach the tight spaces between your teeth or under your gumline with a toothbrush. That's why daily flossing is important.

Adapted from information found at: <http://www.adha.org>

Did you know ...

Flossing your teeth daily
 can extend your life
 expectancy by years!

