



DENTAL TIPS

From Dr. Joel Scheir, DDS, PC

The Dental Body Connection

More than ever, people are becoming aware of the connection between systemic disease and dental health. Dentists and physicians have known for years that illnesses and conditions of the mouth, gums, and teeth are directly related to illnesses and conditions in the rest of the body. Research has recently provided ample evidence to back this.

Most patients understand the concept of infection and how the body may become infected by "germs." Many also understand the basics of inflammation. If you hit your thumb with a hammer, it will usually become red, swell, become hot, and it will hurt! Periodontal (gum) disease causes bacterial infection and inflammation. By-products of this bacteria and the inflammation that goes with it can be a major factor in the development of diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and stroke.

According to the ADA, approximately 70% of the adult population has some form of periodontal disease. Periodontal disease is caused by the bacteria growing around the teeth and the subsequent inflammatory response that occurs. This results in the destruction of the tissue and bone around teeth, causing loose teeth, exposed roots, bad breath, sensitivity, bleeding, swelling and pain. It is the major cause of adult tooth loss.

It's About More Than Just Your Smile

Even if a patient is not concerned about the health of their mouth, they should be aware of the effects this disease has on their body! The types of bacteria found in periodontal disease are directly related to the bacteria found in heart disease. Patients with periodontal disease have an ongoing inflammatory response that elevates white blood cell count and c-reactive protein levels. These elevated levels are found in patients with coronary heart disease. Those who receive treatment and control their periodontal disease may be able to reduce their risk or the severity of heart disease.

Heart disease is not the only condition linked to periodontal disease. Diabetes and preterm low birth weight babies have also been shown to be related.

It is now known that the bacteria that causes periodontal disease does not confine itself to the mouth. It travels throughout the body. As the inflammatory system attempts to "fight off" these bacteria, the inflammatory response becomes widespread and damages organs, arteries and tissues. Unless the periodontal condition is treated the bacteria and inflammation will not go away. Once periodontal disease has been diagnosed, it is in the patient's best interest to accept treatment.

There are many forms of periodontal treatment. The first step is proper diagnosis. For your dentist to properly diagnose you, you need a clinical examination: full mouth x-rays and probing and recording or pocket (the space between the tooth and the gums) depths. Once diagnosed, there are many treatment options. You and your dentist can discuss and decide on the best option for you. By treating the condition you can maintain a healthy mouth and reduce inflammation. This will allow you to live life as a generally healthier person.