

Dental Care: Oral Health & Wellness

Can what's in your mouth make you sick?

Ninety percent of medical illness has oral manifestation. This means that your oral health can cause other, seemingly unrelated, illness or disease. In fact, oral bacteria and oral disease are linked to a variety of serious and potentially life-threatening illnesses.

Importance of Oral Health

There is a strong relationship between your oral health and general health. For example:

- Tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs affect your overall and oral health.
- Dry mouth, or a lack of saliva, puts you at an increased risk for tooth decay.
- Oral pain resulting in an inability to eat properly can prevent you from getting the nutrition your body needs to stay healthy.

Periodontal Disease

Your mouth is connected to your body, and is often times used to diagnose and treat a number of illnesses. For example:

- The advanced form of gum disease, called periodontitis, causes tooth loss. This is sometimes associated with cardiovascular disease, stroke and bacterial pneumonia.
- Pregnant women with periodontitis are at an increased risk for delivering babies that are pre-term, have low birth weight or both.
- Diabetics are more likely to develop periodontitis, and more severe cases of it, than non-diabetics.
- People who smoke or use alcohol are at increased risk for periodontitis and other conditions, such as oral cancer.

What This Means to You

Given the potential link between periodontitis and systemic health problems, preventing periodontitis may turn out to be an important step in maintaining your

overall health. In most cases, this can be accomplished with daily oral hygiene, like brushing and flossing, and regular professional care. Tell your dentist about changes in your oral health, including any recent illnesses or chronic conditions, and provide an updated health history including medication use, both prescription and over-the-counter products. If you smoke, talk to your dentist about options for quitting smoking.



Did you know...?

Periodontal disease is the most chronic infection affecting Americans. These infections present significant health risks. For example, dentists often are first to diagnose osteoporosis and oral cancers in patients.