

PERIODONTAL DISEASE and SYSTEMIC HEALTH

Research clearly shows that there is a strong correlation between oral (periodontal) infections and generalized (systemic) medical problems. There are over 300 different types of bacteria normally found in the mouth, and the mouth is connected to the entire body.

A gum infection is similar to an infection that might occur elsewhere in your body. Bacteria are everywhere, including in our mouths. When the bacteria multiply past a critical number, problems begin. Why would the bacterial count change? Poor oral self-care, genetics, prescription medication, illness or systemic problems, and diminished salivary flow might contribute. When the body recognizes bacterial invaders, the immune system initiates a response to fight off the invader.

You might say “My gums have always bled like this” and not seek treatment. Imagine seeing blood gushing from your eyes when you washed your face. You would seek immediate medical attention, perhaps even go to an emergency room!

Gum disease is an infection in your mouth, no different than an infection elsewhere in your body. The bacteria invade the soft tissues and the bone and get into the blood stream. In this way, they are then able to circulate throughout the entire body. Along with the bacteria are dead cells, metabolic by-products, toxins, food debris and viruses.

Just as we know that smoking has an adverse affect on our health, science is examining a link between gum disease and many systemic conditions such as cardiovascular and respiratory disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, premature birth and low birth weight, stroke, diabetes mellitus, and possibly rheumatoid arthritis. Although the scientific data have yet to confirm the links as diagnostic indicators, it is important for us to recognize the possible implications. The oral cavity is part of the human biology linked to all other body systems and is a portal of entry for a host of infective organisms. It only makes sense to keep it as clean as possible to reduce the risk of not only oral infection but possibly systemic inflammation as well.

Thorough oral self-care need not be difficult or time-consuming. The benefits are more than just sweet breath and great looking smile. Spending just a few minutes a day caring for your teeth and gums and coming in for the professional hygiene visits at the intervals we advise can make the difference between whole body health and disease. After all, the jaw bones are connected to all our other bones!