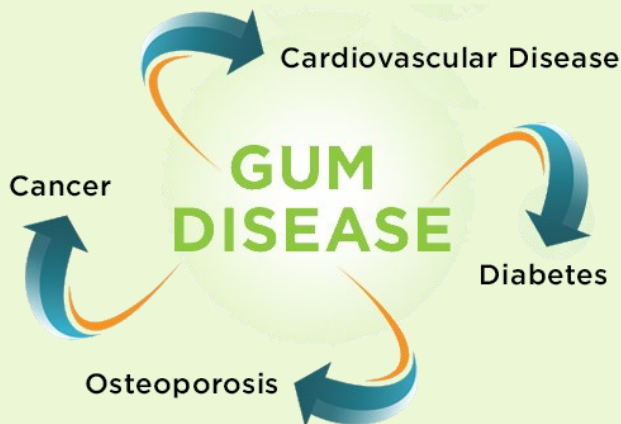


Beyond the Mouth: The Perio-Systemic Link



From the American Academy of Periodontology



A growing body of research suggests that periodontal disease may share a link with other systemic conditions. Recent studies indicate that inflammation may be the culprit behind these links. Here are a few conditions that share a notable connection to periodontal disease.

Diabetes

People with diabetes are more likely to have periodontal disease than people without diabetes, probably because people with diabetes are more susceptible to contracting infections. In fact, periodontal disease is often considered a complication of diabetes. Those who do not have their diabetes under control are especially at risk.

Research has suggested that the relationship between diabetes and periodontal disease is bi-directional, and periodontal disease may make it more difficult for people who have diabetes to control their blood sugar. Severe periodontal disease can increase blood sugar, contributing to increased periods of time when the body functions with a high blood sugar, putting people with diabetes at risk for complications.

Cardiovascular Disease

Several studies have shown that periodontal disease is associated with cardiovascular disease. While a cause-and-effect relationship has not yet been proven, research has indicated that periodontal disease increases the risk of cardiovascular disease.

Periodontal disease can also exacerbate existing cardiovascular conditions. Patients at risk for infective endocarditis may require antibiotics prior to dental procedures. Your periodontist and cardiologist will be able to determine if your heart condition requires use of antibiotics prior to dental procedures.

Stroke

In one study that looked at the causal relationship of oral infection as a risk factor for stroke, people diagnosed with acute cerebrovascular ischemia were found more likely to have an oral infection when compared to those in the control group. Both stroke and periodontal disease are associated with inflammation of the blood vessels.

Rheumatoid Arthritis

Researchers discovered that patients with rheumatoid arthritis (RA)—a chronic, inflammatory disease of the joints—are eight times more likely to have periodontal disease than those without RA. However, the research indicates that poor oral hygiene alone did not account for the connection between RA and gum disease, which means that other factors play a role as well.

Cancers

Research found that men with a history of periodontal disease are 14 percent more likely to develop cancer than men with healthy gums. In fact, researchers discovered that men with periodontal disease are 49 percent more likely to develop kidney cancer, 54 percent more likely to develop pancreatic cancer, and 30 percent more likely to develop blood cancers.

Kidney Disease

A study published in the *Journal of Periodontology* suggests that toothless adults may be more likely to have chronic kidney disease than adults with all of their teeth. Untreated periodontal disease, the leading cause of tooth loss in adults, can lead to bone loss around teeth, which can then cause teeth to loosen and fall out. In the study, missing teeth shared a significant association with chronic kidney disease, which is also an inflammatory condition.

Research suggests that periodontal disease shares an association with systemic conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, pregnancy complications, and rheumatoid arthritis.

The AAP recommends that those living with any of these conditions notify their periodontists of their medical histories. Likewise, those diagnosed with periodontal disease should make their physicians aware, creating an informed care team that can manage both oral and physical ailments effectively.