

A Healthy Smile: Not Just A Question For Your Dentist

Why Women Should Be Aware Of Their Oral Health And Its Association With Their Heart Health

(NAPSA)—Did you know that having healthy teeth and gums may result in more than having sparkling white teeth and fresh breath? Many people may not realize that taking proper care of their mouth may be important to their overall health. In fact, a growing body of research suggests an association between severe gum disease and certain serious health conditions, such as heart disease—the No. 1 cause of death in women.

Gum diseases include gingivitis and periodontitis. Gingivitis, an early form of gum disease and the first stage of gum inflammation, is caused by the buildup of plaque and bacteria above the gumline. Untreated gingivitis can result in chronic infection and inflammation, which can lead to periodontitis, a more serious form of gum disease. Recent studies have demonstrated that there is an association between periodontitis and certain systemic diseases, such as heart disease.

On the positive side, recent research also suggests that achieving and maintaining good oral health may be important to an individual's overall health, including the heart. This is especially important news for women, as heart disease is the leading cause of death of women in the United States. In 2003 alone, cardiovascular disease claimed the lives of more than 480,000 females, compared to the nearly 270,000 lives lost to all cancers combined.

Dr. Lori Mosca, Director of New York-Presbyterian Hospital Preventive Cardiology Program

Oral care steps that may benefit your heart are:

- Use a toothpaste with an anti-bacterial ingredient to help prevent gingivitis, a recommendation recently endorsed by the ADA.
- Brush for 2 minutes twice a day.
- Floss daily.
- See your dentist every six months.



and Professor of Medicine at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, says, "I think women will be surprised to learn that having poor oral health may affect their heart health and, in fact, that a severe gum disease, called periodontitis, and heart disease have several risk factors in common."

Is There an Association?

There are several theories as to how periodontitis might be associated with heart disease. One theory is that bacteria may enter the bloodstream through the mouth and have the potential to attach to fatty deposits in the blood vessels, which may contribute to heart disease. People with pre-existing heart conditions may also be more susceptible to developing infections of the heart's valves or tissues.

While current research on the association between heart disease and periodontitis is not conclusive, it points toward evidence of a relationship.

Who's at Risk?

Without proper oral care at home and regular dental visits, gum inflammation can be a risk

for anyone. It is estimated that 80 percent of adults have experienced some form of gum disease. Additionally, people with uncontrolled diabetes or women who are pregnant are at increased risk for developing gingivitis.

What Can You Do Now?

It's important for women to know they can take simple steps to maintain good oral health—which may also benefit their heart.

Dr. Mosca says, "Even though more research is needed to better understand the oral health/total body health association, one way people can promote better oral health is by taking a step as simple as choosing a toothpaste that fights both bacteria and gum inflammation, like Colgate Total."

Oral care steps that may benefit your heart are:

- Use a toothpaste with an anti-bacterial ingredient to help prevent gingivitis, a recommendation recently endorsed by the American Dental Association (ADA). Colgate Total is the only toothpaste both approved by the FDA and accepted by the ADA to help prevent and reduce gingivitis.
- Brush for 2 minutes twice a day.
- Floss daily.
- See your dentist every six months.

Take time to think about simple steps that you can take to help your heart, including regular exercise, proper diet and perhaps even taking care of your mouth. Your heart will thank you for it!

For more information, go to www.HealthyMouthHealthyBody.com.



Note for Editors: Colgate Total is FDA approved for the prevention of tooth decay, plaque and gingivitis but not approved for the prevention or treatment of periodontitis or other diseases, such as heart disease.