

# Health And Well-Being

## Erectile Dysfunction and Your Oral Health

(NAPS)—It is never a bad time to talk about erectile dysfunction (ED), even when you are at the dentist. Periodontal disease has long been connected to various systemic diseases including cardio-vascular disease, diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis and respiratory problems. Recently, though, it has also been connected to erectile dysfunction, which can have a negative impact on the quality of life for patients.

Periodontal disease is an inflammatory infection of the gums caused by plaque and involves the supporting structures of the teeth. Strong brushing and flossing habits can help prevent periodontal diseases, but a recent study shows that only about half of all Americans brush their teeth twice a day and floss daily.

“June is National Men’s Health Month and is a great time to create good habits around brushing, flossing and overall health,” said Kyle Dosch, DDS, Delta Dental of Washington’s dental director and member dentist. “Taking care of your oral health is about more than just having a nice smile; it also can positively influence your overall health.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control, half of adults over the age of 30 have some form of gum disease and more than 70% of adults over 65 have periodontal disease. Gingivitis and periodontitis are the two main types of periodontal disease, which stem from plaque and tartar building up on a person’s teeth, causing their gums to become swollen, painful and to bleed easily. Advanced gum disease, or periodontitis, can cause a loss of bone mass in and around the tooth sockets and jawbone, which ultimately can lead to teeth becoming loose, falling out or needing to be extracted.

So, what does all of that have to do with ED? In a nutshell it means that while poor oral health doesn’t cause erectile dysfunction, it can be an underlying issue. Keeping your mouth healthy can help solve a number of health problems, such as ED, which includes difficulty getting and maintaining an erection, and reduced sexual desire.

A 2015 study conducted in Taiwan determined men diagnosed with erectile dysfunction were 80% more likely to have been diagnosed with chronic peri-



### **A visit to the dentist may give you more to smile about than you realize.**

odontal disease than men without erectile dysfunction.

This can happen because chronic inflammation caused by gum disease can damage cells which line your blood vessels, including the blood vessels in the penis. When these cells are damaged, it can result in impaired blood flow throughout the body, leading to erectile dysfunction. Chronic inflammation can also lead to impotence, diabetes or heart disease.

There is good news, though. While poor oral health may be associated with erectile dysfunction, a strong oral care routine may help in managing this condition.

Ways to prevent gum disease include:

- Brush for two minutes, twice a day
- Floss at least once a day
- Schedule regular dental checkups and cleanings
- Maintain a healthy diet and limit sugary food and drinks
- Avoid tobacco use
- Replace your toothbrush every three to four months

Studies around the world have shown that patients suffering from both moderate to severe erectile dysfunction and chronic periodontitis who received treatment for their gum disease reported that the severity of their ED lessened after just three months.

So, if you are experiencing symptoms of erectile dysfunction, you may want to mention this to your dentist. Your dentist is specifically trained to understand how issues with your oral health can impact your medical history, and vice versa.

For more information about oral health, visit Delta Dental of Washington’s blog.