

The Mouth/Body Connection

When you think of neglected oral hygiene what comes to mind? Problems like decaying teeth, swollen gums, and bad breath? Well, medical experts say an unhealthy, bacteria-filled mouth can also lead to a host of problems throughout the body, such as heart disease, diabetes, blood infection, and even preterm, low birth weight babies.

“...We have come to recognize that the mouth is a mirror of the body...and it is critical to overall health and well-being.”

Former Surgeon General David Satcher, Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General, 2000.

According to the Academy of General Dentistry, “It is important that patients keep all members of their health care team well informed of their medical histories, lifestyle and eating habits.” Dentists are on the front line of early detection. Nutritional deficiencies limit the body’s ability to fight disease, and in many cases the mouth is the first line of defense. Healthy gum tissue and saliva are essential to fighting infection.

When the gums are infected, bacteria can enter the bloodstream, travel to major organs and set off other problems. The latest research shows that untreated periodontal (gum) disease may have a significant relationship to the following diseases:

- diabetes
- leukemia
- cancer
- heart disease
- kidney disease

Dental cavities and periodontal disease are the main causes of tooth loss. Knowing how to identify potential problems – and incorporating a daily hygiene regimen of brushing and flossing – could prevent your chances of tooth decay, tooth loss and other illnesses. Routine visits to the dentist effectively reduce dental disease.

Doctors agree that there is much more to learn, but findings prove that consistent, preventive dental care is extremely important. Remember that practicing good oral hygiene can lead to improvements in your overall health.

Oral Health & Wellness content provided by the American Dental Association, the American Academy of Periodontology and the Academy of General Dentistry.

