



# Oral Health and TOTAL Health

Oral health is an important part of total health. Researchers have found increased evidence that shows a link between bacteria in mouths and some major medical problems. Bacteria from the mouth can enter the blood stream and flow to organs throughout the body and begin new infections.

## Research shows poor oral health:

### Leads to heart disease

- There is a direct link between gum disease and heart disease.
- People with gum disease are twice as likely to have certain types of heart disease.

### Increases the chances of stroke

- The fatty blockages in the arteries of stroke victims contain bacteria that come from the mouth.

### Increases a woman's chances of having a premature, underweight baby

- Pregnant women who have gum disease are seven times more likely to give birth early and have babies with low birthweight.
- Researchers think that gum infections may trigger chemicals that cause a pregnant woman to go into labor early.

### Makes blood sugar levels in diabetics hard to control

- People with uncontrolled diabetes are more likely to have gum disease.
- Gum infections can cause diabetics to have problems controlling blood sugar and can lead to serious illness.
- Diabetics have a harder time controlling gum disease because they are at higher risk for infections and their gums do not heal as well.

### Causes breathing problems or worsen lung disease

- Bacteria in mouths may be inhaled into lungs and cause lung disease in those who already have a weakened immune system from another illness.
- Oral disease may increase the risk for pneumonia three to six times.
- Bacteria may make existing lung disease worse.

### How to prevent possible health problems due to oral disease?

- See a dentist regularly for exams and cleanings.
- Keep your mouth healthy – Brush at least twice a day and floss daily.
- Keep doctors informed of changes in your dental health and your dentist informed of changes in your overall health.
- Use rinses that kill bacteria (Listerine, Peridex or PerioGard).
- Change your toothbrush after any illness or gum infection and regularly every two to three months.

## Healthy Teeth, Healthy Life!