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 bloodstream 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!**