

Clean teeth

The secret to a healthier heart!

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Did you know that treatment of gum disease may reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease? Researchers from Australia and Norway have recently provided strong evidence linking periodontal disease to an increased risk of developing blood clots, which could lead to the onset of heart attack and stroke. Their study also indicates that inflammation in the mouth has a measurable effect in the bloodstream, and therefore the rest of the body.

What is gum disease?

Teeth are covered by sticky plaque, made up of food, bacteria and bacterial waste products. If plaque is left on the teeth the gums become irritated and may bleed when you brush. This early stage of gum disease is called *gingivitis*.

When plaque is left on the teeth it may harden to form tartar (calculus). Over time gingivitis can develop into **Periodontitis**, in which the jaw bone slowly resorbs (goes away) due to chronic gum, causing teeth to loosen, shift, or fall out.

Why might gum disease be linked to heart disease?

Studies in the past have suggested that the bacteria that cause gum disease may increase the rate at which arteries become blocked. Researchers believe that bacteria can leave people's infected gums and enter the bloodstream, activating the immune system (the body's defense mechanism) and making their artery walls inflamed and narrowed.

Another theory is that the bacteria enter the blood and attach themselves directly to the fatty deposits that are already present in a person's arteries, causing further narrowing. Other lifestyle factors such as smoking, poor diet, body mass index, race/ethnicity, and cholesterol levels are known to increase the risk of heart disease, and they are often associated with poor dental health as well.

How can you prevent gum disease?

The best way to prevent gum disease is to maintain good oral hygiene. This means brushing your teeth twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste and regularly visiting your dentist or hygienist. Even thorough brushing and flossing cannot remove every trace of plaque, your dentist needs to check your teeth regularly and remove any tartar build up.

What are the signs that you have gum disease?

Gum disease is usually painless. The only sign of gum disease is bleeding gums when brushing. If you find that your gums are bleeding when you brush, it is vital that you clean them more thoroughly, not less.

How is gum disease treated?

Gum disease treatment aims to remove plaque and make it as difficult as possible for it to reform. With mild gum disease, more careful brushing and flossing may cure the problem without need for further treatment.

However, once a hard layer of tartar has formed, you cannot remove it yourself. Your dentist or hygienist needs to remove it with a specialist-scaling tool. He or she will also polish your teeth's surfaces to make it harder for bacteria to attach themselves. Your dentist may recommend an antiseptic mouthwash to control plaque levels in the short term but these are not used for longer than one month.

*Dr. Noie and his team at the Unicore Center for Cosmetic and Implant Dentistry have been protecting the health of their patients' heart by providing them optimal oral health for over a decade. To learn if you are at risk or to learn more, please go to his website at www.drnoie.com or call his office at 281-332-4700 and ask for an appointment for a comprehensive oral health check-up and receive **a complimentary oral cancer check-up** as their gift to you. Protect your heart by ensuring that your oral health is in optimal condition and gain a healthier, happier living for life.*