

Heart Disease and Your Oral Health

What is the relationship between oral health and heart disease?

Recent research has suggested a link between poor oral health and cardiovascular disease, or heart disease. Here are some of the research findings:

- Poor oral health may be a predictor of future or current heart disease.
- Oral infections may produce inflammation that can be associated with heart disease.
- People with poor oral health tend to have poor nutrition since they may not have enough teeth to eat a healthy diet, which is essential for preventing heart disease.
- Individuals with chronic gum disease may be at greater risk of developing heart disease or having a stroke.
- The more teeth a person has lost, the more likely they are to have gum disease and also carotid artery plaques (indicators of heart disease).

Additional research needs to be conducted on the relationship between oral health and heart disease. However, it is important to note that people with good oral health generally have fewer chronic diseases, including heart disease.

What can I do if I already have heart disease?

If you already have heart disease it is important to have good oral hygiene habits. Good oral hygiene can help prevent some types of heart infections (such as bacterial endocarditis). You need to take special precautions if you have any of the following conditions: prosthetic heart valves, history of endocarditis, or heart defects (such as damaged valves, etc).

Follow these easy steps to keep your heart and mouth healthy.

- Practice good oral hygiene by brushing twice a day and flossing once a day. In addition, make sure that you see your dentist regularly.
- Make sure you tell your dentist about your heart condition.
- Follow any instructions given to you by your dentist and physician. This is especially important because you may need a prescription for an antibiotic before your dental appointments.

Brushing Tips

Always use a soft-bristled toothbrush.

Replace your toothbrush every three months.

Never share a toothbrush, it spreads germs.

How to Brush

- Place the toothbrush against the gum line at a 45-degree angle. Use a small circular motion to brush your teeth and gums.



- Brush back and forth on the chewing surfaces of your teeth holding the brush flat.



- Brush the back of your teeth.
- Brush your tongue! This will freshen your breath and remove germs.
- Brush for at least three minutes, two times a day. Be sure to brush at bedtime to remove bacteria that can cause decay while you are sleeping.



Checklist

Tell your dentist that you have heart disease and what medicines you take.

If you take blood thinning medications, speak with your dentist and physician before your appointment.

If prescribed by your dentist or physician, take an antibiotic before your dental appointment.

Flossing Tips

Flossing cleans between the teeth where a toothbrush can't reach.

Flossing helps control bad breath.

How to Floss

- Wrap about 18 inches of floss around the middle fingers. Gently slide the floss between the teeth (don't snap the floss into the gums).



- As the floss reaches the gum line, make a C-shape around the tooth until you feel pressure against your tooth.



- Gently scrape the tooth surface with the floss.



- Move the floss as it becomes soiled and repeat the process for each tooth.



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