Heart Disease and Oral Health

Your Mouth is the Gateway to Your Body

Maryland
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

The health of your mouth can affect your overall health, including the health of your heart.

Untreated gum disease can cause inflammation. Inflamed blood vessels can result in less blood flowing to the heart. This may contribute to high blood pressure.

Bacteria in the mouth can also affect the body. Harmful bacteria can enter the bloodstream through the gums. Here the bacteria becomes part of the fatty plaques (a buildup of fat, cholesterol, calcium and other substances) in blood vessels. A heart attack occurs when fatty plaques block a blood vessel leading to the heart.

Talk to Your Dentist

Good oral hygiene habits such as brushing teeth with fluoride toothpaste at least twice a day, flossing and eating a diet low in sugar help to prevent gum disease and reduce harmful bacteria.

If you have a heart condition, tell your dentist. Provide your dentist with a list of any medications that you take before your appointment. You may need to take special precautions if you have:

1. A prosthetic heart valve or have had a heart valve repaired with prosthetic material;
2. A history of endocarditis;
3. A heart transplant with abnormal heart valve function; or
4. Certain congenital heart defects.
5. If needed and prescribed by your dentist or physician, take an antibiotic before your dental appointment.

Keep your mouth and heart healthy.

- Choose fresh foods low in salt and sugar
- Exercise regularly
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Reduce stress, sleep well
- Take your medication

- Limit alcohol
- Cut back on caffeine
- Ask your dental provider to check your blood pressure during your regular checkups
- Quit tobacco

Eliminate smoking and improve your overall health.

Smoking is related to gum disease and heart disease. Smoking weakens your body's immune system, which makes it harder to fight off a gum infection. Smoking makes it harder for your gums to heal.

Need help quitting tobacco use?

- **The Maryland Tobacco Quitline is a free service provided by the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) to help people quit using tobacco products.**
- **Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) for free telephone-based counseling, support, and tips to help you quit smoking for good. You can also visit smokingstopshere.com.**