



TOOTHFULLY SPEAKING!

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Happy Heart month everyone! February is our month to bring awareness to nurturing your heart, not only romantically, but health-wise! There is an increasing amount of information in the media about the effects of an unhealthy oral cavity on the rest of your body. The trick is to decipher the plethora of information and figure out how you can apply it to your own individual case.

If you have periodontal disease, your risk of a stroke, aneurysm or a heart attack increases - some researchers say up to 2X. How is it possible the mouth can have this effect on the engine of your body? Periodontal disease and cardiovascular disease are both "inflammatory conditions". A comparison would be getting strep throat. The infection starts locally, but can cause inflammation and long term damage to other parts of your body, such as your heart if you develop rheumatic fever.

Both periodontal disease and cardiovascular disease are CHRONIC inflammatory conditions. Bacteria from the "pockets," the spaces between the teeth and gums, can enter the person's body via the circulation and cause a systemic "inflammatory" reaction. The bacteria can damage and thicken the walls of blood vessels in your heart and elsewhere, resulting in heart disease and strokes. The greatest damage to blood vessels is seen in people who have suffered periodontal disease the longest.

Researchers have also discovered periodontal bacteria in the atheroma (plaques) on the inside of the blood vessel walls of stroke and heart attack victims. They surmise that these plaques or blockages cause more of an inflammatory reaction and they fracture off more easily creating a higher risk of floating blood clots to another vital organ and blocking off its circulation as well.

In addition if you have any other risk factors such as high cholesterol, smoking, diabetes, no exercise routine, a family history of heart disease, or obesity - the risks increase up to 10X the average population.

The combined surface area of all the "pockets" in your mouth is about the size of an ORANGE. If you have an infection anywhere else in the body that big you would deal with it immediately! But because periodontal disease is silent - it is ignored; 87% of the population has some form of periodontitis and the numbers are increasing due to lack of diagnosis and treatment.

So if you have periodontal pockets that are more than 4mm then the likelihood of chronic periodontal disease should be investigated. If you have a family history of cardiovascular disease, you must speak with your health care provider and for more information www.kamloopsperiodontist.com, www.perio.org. Floss for your heart!



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