

SmileSmart! sm

This edition is dedicated to understanding the important role of oral health and protecting against medical disorders, courtesy of Dental Health Services.

Oral health and overall health: Why a healthy mouth is good for your body

You've heard of the mind-body connection, but what about the *mouth-body* connection? To many people a dental visit is only about teeth. But what goes in the rest of your body affects your mouth, and what goes on in your mouth affects the rest of your body.

The state of your mouth can often provide information about your overall health. Dentists can be instrumental in helping to diagnose many conditions and diseases that have oral effects. She or he can also make sure

you get specialized oral and dental care if you have an existing chronic condition that requires it. Taking care of your mouth, teeth and gums is an admirable goal in and of itself. Good oral and dental hygiene can help prevent bad breath, gum disease and tooth decay—and can help you keep your teeth as you get older.

There are many reasons to brush and floss. A healthy mouth will help protect you from or at least not potentate medical disorders. An unhealthy mouth may increase your risk of seri-

ous health problems such as diabetes, stroke, heart attack and preterm labor. The case for good oral health keeps getting stronger. Understand the significance of oral health—and its *mouth-body* connection.



Healthy Habits.

- Visit your dentist regularly to have your mouth examined and see your dentist immediately if you notice any problems
- Brush and floss your teeth daily
- Eat a healthy diet
- Do not smoke
- If you are pregnant, continue good oral health and eat healthy foods—what you take in affects your baby
- Teach your children your own healthy habits—so that they can live by your healthy examples

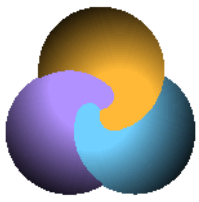
Heart disease.

Oral inflammation due to bacteria (gingivitis) may also contribute to blood clots and clogged arteries. Bacteria in the mouth may cause inflammation throughout your whole body including your arteries. This inflammation may play a role in raising your risk of a stroke or a heart attack.

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS? CONTACT US!

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What's in your mouth tells much about your health.

A look inside your mouth or a swab of saliva can tell your doctor volumes about what's going on inside your body. Your mouth is a window into what's going on in the rest of your body. According to the Academy of General Dentistry, "more than 90 percent of all systemic diseases produce oral signs and symptoms."

Poorly controlled diabetes.

If you have diabetes, you're already at a higher risk of developing gum disease. Chronic gum disease may make diabetes more complicated to manage. Infection may cause insulin resistance, which disrupts blood sugar control.

Preterm birth. Rigorous gum disease may raise the risk of preterm delivery and giving birth to a low weight baby. The National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial research reports "as many as 18 percent of preterm, low birth weight babies born in the U.S. each year may be attributed to oral infections." The theory is that oral bacteria release toxins, which reach the placenta through the mother's bloodstream and interfere with the development and growth of the fetus.

Saliva is a helpful problem-solving tool.

Your doctor can test saliva for a variety of substances. For example, saliva testing measure certain cancer markers, stress responses in newborns, bone loss in women and signs for toxins or drugs.

Your mouth is the gateway for infection.

If you don't brush, floss and visit your dentist regularly for cleanings, plaque can build up along your gum line, creating an environment for bacteria growth between your gums and teeth. This is called gingivitis and left untreated can lead to periodontitis affecting the bone; the most severe is known as trench mouth. If you have gum disease, bacteria from your mouth can enter your bloodstream and if you have a weakened immune system, oral bacteria in your bloodstream may cause you to develop infections in other parts of your body.

Undeniable case for *Mouth-body* healthy habits.

If you didn't already have enough reasons to take good care of your mouth, teeth and gums, the connection between your oral health and your overall health offers even more. Make an investment in your overall health now and for your future—you're worth it. Decide to practice good oral hygiene every day!

Do you know someone who needs a great dental plan?

We've been providing excellent dental coverage for individuals, families, and employers and other groups for more than 30 years. If you know anyone that could benefit from a great dental plan, have them contact us today at 800.637.6453 or www.dentalhealthservices.com. We're ready to help.

How can we help you today?

Your Member Service Specialist is always close at hand, ready to answer your questions and help you get the most out of your dental plan. You can get in touch with yours:

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