

Chronic Illness is Related to Mouth Germs! What You Need to Know

The dental profession has known for decades that the condition of a person's mouth is directly related to their overall, general health and well-being. Now it appears that the medical community at large is recognizing and even encouraging more research into this connection. It turns out that inflammation and bacterial infections in the mouth are linked to conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and even pregnancy issues! Taking care of your teeth and gums is not just about having an attractive smile, it can be essential in staying healthy.

What do we know?

We know that bacterial infection and tissue inflammation are important factors in the development of gum and bone (periodontal) disease. We know that inflammation is also a major factor in the development or worsening of many chronic illnesses. Ironically, inflammation is the first response of a healthy immune system to injury, infection or irritation. It is only when the inflammation spreads or the source of the injury, infection or irritation is allowed to continue, that the entire body suffers.

Here's why:

- Blood vessels dilate around the site of an infection, often causing swelling, redness and heat. White (infection killing) cells rush to an affected area with the purpose of surrounding the bacteria and preventing their spread.
- If the infection and the source of the infection is eliminated by the white cells, the situation is resolved. If the cause of the inflammation does not go away or gets worse, the inflammatory process continues.
- If the inflammatory process is overwhelmed by infection, the white cells just keep trying. The body recognizes trouble in the system and continues to ignite defenses. If nothing is done about the source of an infection, the swelling, heat, and attack of the white cells will affect more than just the bacteria. Damage can occur to organs, blood vessels, joints and even nerves.
- An overstressed inflammatory system also does not do its job of killing bacteria. They can spread and eventually travel throughout the body, doing even more damage.
- So, if bacteria in the mouth are not controlled, which is what can happen in chronic gum and bone (periodontal) disease, the body may never shut down the "full body" inflammatory process. Why? **Because the cause of the inflammation, the bacteria in the mouth, continue to incite the process.** It can just go on and on.
- The longer bacteria and the inflammation they cause are allowed to spread from the mouth, the higher the chance for damage to the body as a whole.

What can we do?

Here at our office we have many methods of helping people control bacteria in the mouth. We actively look for and treat periodontal disease so that our patients can maintain a healthy immune system. This may include more frequent professional cleanings, or more extensively; root planing and scaling of the teeth to remove diseased tissues and bacteria. In some cases certain medicines may be recommended, and we will provide you with detailed home care instructions and help with your daily mouth cleaning routines. With the mouth germs brought under control, the body's immune system can begin the healing process.

Even if no dentist has ever previously told you that you need gum and bone care, new conditions require new treatment. It is not uncommon for even "regular" patients to develop mouth infections from time to time and need more than "just a cleaning" such as they have had in the past. Just as a person may develop high blood pressure, having never had it in the past, so may a person develop gum and bone disease. Our bodies change and face challenges all the time.

We are here to help you maintain the health of your mouth, which in turn will make you a healthier person.

Call us if you want to know more. We are always happy to help!