



# Family & Cosmetic Dentistry

by Dr. Mary Jane Hanlon

## Heart Disease and Oral Health Warning signs in the mouth can save lives.

Heart disease will claim half a million lives this year. Most adults know heart disease is the number one killer of Americans. However, a consumer survey reveals 60 percent don't know that a sore or painful jaw is one warning sign that may indicate an impending heart attack.

Research shows over 90 percent of all systemic diseases - including heart disease - have oral symptoms. A sore or painful jaw could indicate an impending heart attack or heart disease, making bi-annual visits to the dentist an important investment in one's oral as well as overall health.

Gum disease, often called gingivitis in its early stages, is caused by plaque buildup and affects 75 percent of American adults. New studies suggest that people who have gum disease are at a higher risk for heart attack. If bacteria in the infected gums dislodge, they can enter the bloodstream, attach to blood vessels and increase clot formation. Clots decrease the blood supply flow to the heart and can increase chances of a heart attack and aggravate higher blood pressure.

Signs of gum disease include bleeding or puffy

gums, bad breath, sores in the mouth, receding gums, pus or infection between gums and teeth and/or gums that pull away from the teeth. Preventing plaque buildup by brushing and flossing regularly helps to minimize the chance for getting gum disease. Seeing your dentist every 6 months can help identify gum disease as well as overall health problems in their earliest stages.

Dentists know that your teeth and gums hold important clues to overall health and can work with you to reduce your risk and treat current health problems.

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