



Tooth Talk

“Hey Doc, I heard that gum disease can cause heart attack and stroke. Is that true?”

Gum disease, also known as periodontal disease, can potentially affect your overall health. It can increase the risk of developing heart disease and stroke. Even though a definite relationship between periodontal disease and heart disease/stroke has not been established through research at this time, several studies have shown that people with periodontal disease have a higher chance of developing coronary artery disease than those without.

Currently, there are two possible explanations for the association between periodontal disease and heart disease/stroke. First explanation is that the bacteria that causes periodontal disease can release toxic molecules into the blood stream and these molecules can form fatty plaques in the arteries. These fatty plaques can narrow the arteries or form blood clots, leading to heart attack or stroke.

Second explanation is that the bacteria from periodontal disease causes the liver to produce high level of certain proteins which inflames the blood vessels. It is the inflammation of the blood vessels that leads to heart attack/stroke.

Signs of periodontal disease include:

- gum bleeding when brushing/flossing
- loose gum tissue around the teeth
- red, swollen, tender gum tissue
- loose teeth
- teeth shifting
- change in the bite
- etc.

If you have any of the signs above, it would be wise for you to see a dentist to assess your gum condition. After all, treating the periodontal disease in your mouth may just gain you many years of living!

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www.drVictorsun.com
705 324-0050

