

UNDERSTANDING YOUR MOUTH-BODY CONNECTION

The holiday parties have ended, the Christmas tree is recycled and the decorations have all been put away. It's the beginning of a new year and traditionally the time we start thinking about ourselves, our health, and how to get back in shape after all the holiday feasts. While many of us are out purchasing new gym memberships or home equipment to tone our bodies, we should not neglect our oral health.

Nearly 75% of Americans suffer from some stage of periodontal (gum) disease and are unaware of it. Although it can be stopped and maintained when detected in its early stages through a healthy home care routine and regular professional cleanings every 3-4 months, oral bacteria has been linked with such life-threatening illnesses such as oral cancer, heart disease, diabetes, respiratory ailments and premature, low birth weight babies.

Periodontal disease is a bacterial infection. These bacteria can enter the bloodstream and travel to major organs and begin new infections. Respiratory conditions can be aggravated when bacteria from the mouth travel to the lungs and lower respiratory system. The bacterial infection can trigger an increase in labor-inducing body fluids, leading to premature delivery. It can also trigger blood clots which can contribute to a heart attack or a stroke.

There are many signs you can look for that signal that you may have gum disease:

- Red, swollen, or tender gums
- Bleeding gums while brushing or flossing
- Loose or separating teeth
- Tooth loss
- Puss around the teeth and gums
- Pain when chewing
- Change in the way your teeth fit together when you bite
- Change in the fit of dentures or partials

However, you should also be aware that in most cases leading up to moderate disease in some individuals, none of the symptoms are felt. Since these individuals aren't flossing to begin with and don't have a good/thorough brushing habit, they may not experience bleeding and especially not pain. The best way to detect periodontal disease is to have regular check-ups and cleanings with your dental team. Working together, you and your dentist can help stop the progression of periodontal disease and ensure it does not lead to more serious physical ailments. Take care of your oral health and keep your body healthy in the New Year!

TROY FOUSTINO

Celebrity Hairstylist
and patient of Dr. Dhaliwal

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