Live Well, Work Well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life.

DENTAL CARE: ORAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Did you know that poor oral health can lead to many seemingly unrelated medical conditions? In fact, oral bacteria and oral disease have been linked to a variety of serious illnesses, including heart disease, diabetes, stroke and pregnancy complications.

Importance of Oral Health

The following examples illustrate the relationship between your oral health and general health.

- Tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs affect both your overall and oral health.

- Dry mouth, or a lack of saliva, increases your risk of tooth decay.

- Oral pain resulting in an inability to eat properly can prevent you from getting the nutrition your body needs to stay healthy.

Periodontal Disease

Oral health can often be used to diagnose underlying health issues.

- The advanced form of gum disease, called periodontitis, causes tooth loss and is also sometimes associated with cardiovascular disease, stroke and bacterial pneumonia.

- Pregnant women with periodontitis are at an increased risk for delivering babies that are pre-term and/or have low birth weight.

- Diabetics are more likely to develop periodontitis, and more severe cases of it.

- People who smoke or drink alcohol have an increased risk of periodontitis and other conditions, such as oral cancer.

What This Means to You

Given the potential link between periodontitis and systemic health problems, preventing periodontitis may turn out to be an important step in maintaining your overall health. In most cases, this can be accomplished by practicing good daily oral hygiene, including brushing and flossing and seeing a dentist every six months for cleanings. Tell your dentist about changes in your oral health, including any recent illnesses or chronic conditions.

Also provide your dentist with an updated health history, including medication you use—both prescription and over-the-counter. If you smoke, talk to your dentist about options for quitting.

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