



ORAL HEALTH AND WIDER HEALTH

Research findings are now helping identify the mouth as an “early warning system” for certain medical conditions. Gum disease, the largest cause of tooth loss in adults, poses potentially significant systemic health implications - and the cost and quality of life implications can be staggering.

How oral health affects those with certain health conditions.

Diabetes – People with diabetes are at a higher risk for gum disease. One study¹ found that when people with diabetes had gum infections treated, they found it easier to manage their blood sugar.

Heart disease and stroke - Gum disease may also increase the risk for heart disease and stroke. That’s because bacteria from the gum tissues may enter the blood stream and cause small blood clots which can contribute to clogging of the arteries².

Pre-term birth - Women with severe gum disease during the second trimester may be up to 7 times more likely to give birth prematurely. Evidence³ of the first documented link between a foetal death and the mother’s pregnancy-related gum disease recently emerged in the United States.

Did you know 3 out of every 4 UK adults over the age of 35 are affected by gum disease⁴.

More research is needed to fully understand the mouth body connection. The good news is that gum disease is a preventable condition and if caught early, preventative measures and medications can slow the development of health complications.

Oral cancer

According to the British Health Foundation, the number of new cases of oral cancer is on the increase. The condition is more common in men than in women, and most cases develop in people who are 40 years of age or over. If not detected early, oral cancer can lead to surgery, radiation therapy and/or chemotherapy. Detecting oral cancer early is the key to successful treatment – regular dental visits can lead to early diagnosis and better chances of recovery.

Did you know Approximately 4,400 new cases of oral cancer are diagnosed every year in the UK resulting in nearly 1,700 deaths⁴.

How dental plans can help

Regular check ups and hygienist visits will help prevent longer term problems from occurring. They’ll also help detect existing problems as early as possible. A comprehensive dental plan will help with the costs of treatment and hopefully engage employees to seek regular preventative care. In this way, dental plans provide a benefit that will help prevent future sickness absence and may even help keep private medical insurance premiums down.

¹ <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15857077>

² <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15699278>

³ Term Stillbirth Caused by Oral Fusobacterium nucleatum” - Obstetrics & Gynecology, February 2010 - Yiping W. Han

⁴ www.dentalhealth.org.uk