

Heart Disease and Stroke

Did you know that the plaque that develops on your teeth is the same plaque that causes heart attacks? The most common type of **bacteria** in dental plaque can escape into the bloodstream, travel through the arteries, and result in blood clots that can cause heart attacks.

A potentially fatal disease called **bacterial** endocarditis – a condition in which the lining of the heart and heart valves becomes enlarged – is also linked to plaque, as is chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, more commonly known as COPD. People with periodontal (gum) disease are nearly twice as likely to suffer from heart disease, according to the American Academy of Periodontology.

In addition, a study conducted by the Boston University School of Dental Medicine in 2006 stated that people who are missing some or all of their teeth due to periodontal disease are at an increased risk of having a stroke.

Because research shows a very strong link between healthy gums and a healthy heart, it's very important to take good care of your gums. Gum disease is caused by plaque buildup. Early signs of gum disease include bleeding or puffy gums, bad breath, mouth sores, and receding gums. You can prevent plaque buildup by brushing at least twice a day and flossing every day, along with visiting your dentist a minimum of every six months. If you notice any signs of gum disease, contact your dentist right away.

*** Information provided by the Massachusetts State Dental Society**