

How Oral Health Impacts Your General Health

Most people are not aware that oral health and overall health are closely linked. Your oral health can offer your dentist important clues about your overall health, but it's also important your dentist is informed about any health problems as well.

Many diseases, such as diabetes, HIV/AIDS, and osteoporosis can have a direct effect on the health of your teeth. Diabetes and HIV often reduce the body's resistance to infection, which can lead to gum disease. Individuals with osteoporosis can have weak or brittle bones, which can also lead to periodontal bone loss.

When you visit your dentist, do you inform him or her of current medications you are taking? Medications for breast and prostate cancer affect the ability of bone to heal. For instance, it's important for the bone to heal properly after a tooth extraction to prevent infection. In addition, use of over-the-counter medications, such as decongestants, antihistamines, and some painkillers can reduce saliva flow. Healthy saliva flow is essential to maintain a healthy mouth, as it washes away food particles and neutralizes harmful acids that could lead to decay and infection.

Do you keep your dentist updated with any new health issues? Some studies have linked oral bacteria and the inflammation associated with it to heart disease, clogged arteries and stroke. Oral bacteria that build up on teeth can eventually lead to infection. If the infection is not brought under control, the inflammation can continue and could spread throughout the body.

The best thing you can do to maintain optimum oral health is to floss regularly, brush at least twice a day, and limit sugar intake. Make sure your dentist has your full medical history, and inform him or her of all current medications you are on. Just like your medical doctor, your dentist should have your full health history to keep your oral health in optimum condition.