

Link Between the Teeth, Gums and General Health, are we Aware?

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Dear Editor,

We all understand that health of the whole body reflects on the face to call face as the mirror of the whole body. To be more specific the oral cavity is the mirror of the health of the individual. Whenever a person falls ill and report to the general physician, after listening to the history the physician will look for some signs in the oral cavity. Thus oral cavity works as gateway for the assessment of general health. Fitting to the saying "we are what we eat". However the physician would miss out to visualise the teeth while tongue projected out will be covering the teeth.¹ The teeth in the oral cavity play a major role in the maintenance of the general health. Researchers have shown there is a greater link between periodontal health and systemic diseases. Recently, evidence has shown that certain common oral infections play a significant role in ATH (Atherosclerosis). The cardiac condition is linked to the periodontal (gums) health of the teeth. The pancreatic disorders are been linked to the health of the periodontium. Further on diabetes, Alzheimer's, cancer, pancreatic cancer, miscarriages, high blood pressure and obesity are linked with periodontal health. Earlier it was thought as the bacteria are the linkage, however the recent researches have inferred that the inflammation may be the association. Treating this inflammation would help to overcome the periodontal health as well as the chronic inflammatory conditions of the body.² The maintenance of the periodontal health in the medically compromised patients can prevent some of the complications. However the medical fraternity is ignorant of some of the facts of the oral cavity.

Aspiration of fine droplets from the mouth containing bacteria can cause upper respiratory tract infections, pneumonia and at times may result in to chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder. Recent research has suggested the bacteria from the throat as well as bacteria from the oral cavity can be drawn in to the lower respiratory tract and cause infection or worsening the disease of the lungs.

A three day work shop conducted by European federation of periodontology (EFA) opined that periodontitis does increase the risk of some systemic conditions and one of the key mechanisms by which this pro-

cess takes place is by bacteraemia whereby germs from a diseased area such as the gums escape into the bloodstream, probably while one chews.

It was first reported in 1996 that periodontal disease was a potential risk factor for preterm birth. To find out if having gum disease could really harm a pregnancy or baby, a group of top scientists recently looked closely at the results of all the research done in recent years. They found that there is a link between gum disease and three possible problems: having a baby with a low weight at birth, giving birth too early in the pregnancy, or having dangerously high blood pressure (pre-eclampsia) during pregnancy. This means that having gum disease could slightly increase a woman's chance of one of these unwelcome pregnancy outcomes.³⁻⁵

Volumes of literature can be accessed on the internet linking the periodontal disease and the various general health problems, Emphasizing the need for health care professionals to rule out any dental disease while examination.

Medical doctor's advice to insist on the dental health in patients and pregnant mothers can make the treatment more effective by removing source of inflammation/infection. Multidisciplinary journals can enhance the awareness of the health care professionals to acquire a comprehensive knowledge and benefit the patients and intern the society.

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