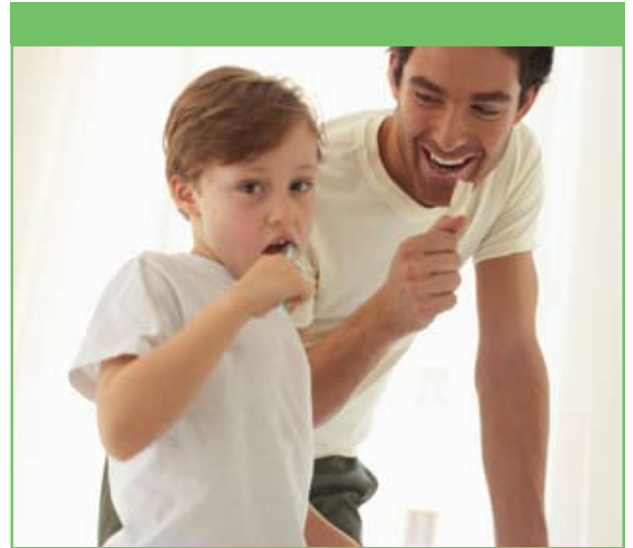


Oral Health And Your Overall Health

Regular dentist visits can do more than keep your smile attractive – they can tell dentists a lot about your overall health, including whether or not you may be developing a disease like diabetes.

New industry research indicates that the health of your mouth mirrors the condition of your body as a whole. For example, when your mouth is healthy, chances are your overall health is good, too. On the other hand, if you have poor oral health, you may have other health problems.



According to the Academy of General Dentistry, there may be a relationship between gum (periodontal) disease and health complications such as stroke and heart disease. Women with gum disease also show higher incidences of pre-term, low birthweight babies.

Further research shows that more than 90 percent of all systemic diseases (involving many organs or the whole body) have oral manifestations, including swollen gums. Such systemic diseases include:

- diabetes
- leukemia
- cancer
- heart disease
- kidney disease

Since most people have regular oral exams, their dentist may be the first health care provider to diagnose a health problem in its early stages. Seeing a dentist regularly helps to keep your mouth in top shape and allows your dentist to watch for developments that may point to other health issues. A dental exam can also detect poor nutrition and hygiene, growth and development problems and improper jaw alignment. Provide your dentist with a complete medical/dental history and inform him or her of any recent health developments, even if they seem unrelated to your oral health.

Doctors conclude that there is still much to learn. But the findings so far show the importance of regular, preventive dental care, and they emphasize the key role that dental health plays in overall health.

Information courtesy of the Academy of General Dentistry, 2006.