

YOUR

Oral Health & Heart Disease

Many factors can lead to heart disease. Your oral health may impact it, too.



Heart disease accounts for a variety of health problems, including coronary artery disease and heart failure. Many forms of the disease involve a hardening or thickening of the arteries caused by a buildup of plaque. Over time, this buildup can make it more difficult for blood to flow through the arteries, eventually creating blockages that can lead to heart attack or stroke.

This can occur as some oral bacteria enter the blood stream through oral cuts and settle on abnormal heart valves or tissues weakened by an existing heart condition. In these cases, the heart valves or tissue can be damaged by the bacteria. If you have a heart condition or disease, or a family history of heart disease, advise your dentist so he or she can provide the proper guidance to best care for your oral and overall health.

Follow your physician's and dentist's instructions, use prescription medications as directed, and maintain your oral health.



What is Good Oral Health?

A great smile. Fresh breath. Pain-free teeth and gums. These are the results of good oral health, and it all starts with brushing and flossing as often as your dentist recommends. Removing food debris from your teeth ensures that sugar and acids don't wear down the enamel on your teeth, which leads to tooth decay.

Don't forget to brush your tongue and inside of your cheeks. Both have pores where bacteria hide. Check with your dentist and see if there's a right toothbrush for you. Dentists most often recommend a soft brush, according to the American Dental Association.

A nutritious diet will contribute to your oral and overall health. Sweets, soft drinks and other non-nutritious foods can lead to tooth decay. Bacteria in the mouth mix with the sugars in these foods and produce acids that attack the teeth. Brush after meals and limit snacking to help minimize this risk. Drinking water throughout the day will help rinse your mouth and neutralize harsh acids.

Inform your dentist immediately if you're experiencing red, swollen, or tender gums; bleeding while brushing or flossing; gums that pull away from the teeth and/or loose or separating teeth; red, white, or swollen areas in any part of your mouth; or persistent bad breath. These can be signs of gum disease.

(Continued next page)

Your Oral Health & Heart Disease

Talk to your dentist about your medical history, including if you have heart disease or a family history of heart disease, or if there has been any change in your health.

Your dentist can help you manage the oral conditions that can result from your medical condition or how you treat it. 🦷

FYI: More information can be found online at the TRICARE Dental Program's (TDP) Dental Health Center (uccitdp.com), the Academy of General Dentistry (agd.org), the American Dental Association (ada.org), and the Mayo Clinic (mayoclinic.org).

Did you know?

- People with gum disease (also known as periodontal disease) have **two to three times the risk** of having a heart attack, stroke, or other serious cardiovascular event.
- **Tooth brushing twice daily and flossing** can prevent and even reverse an early stage of gum disease, known as gingivitis.
- If your dentist says you have gingivitis, ask for a brushing and flossing demonstration to make sure you're doing both correctly.



Source: Harvard Medical School's Harvard Heart Letter (health.harvard.edu)

Fact sheets in United Concordia's oral health series:



• Fluoride & Your Oral Health

• Oral Health for Kids with Special Needs

• Your Oral Health & Heart Disease

• Your Oral Health & Organ Transplants

• Oral Health: Infant to Teen

• Preventive Oral Care for Everyone

• Your Oral Health & Lupus

• Your Oral Health & Rheumatoid Arthritis

• Oral Health & Your Overall Wellness

• Your Oral Health & Diabetes

• Your Oral Health & Oral Cancer

• Your Oral Health & Pregnancy

Download fact sheets from the TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) Dental Health Center: uccitdp.com