



Word of Mouth

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The patient's practice newsletter

December 2008

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Bleeding Gums Linked to Heart Disease: New research

Bad teeth, bleeding gums and poor dental hygiene can end up causing heart disease, scientists heard recently at the Society for General Microbiology's Autumn meeting held at Trinity College, Dublin.

People with poor dental hygiene and those who don't brush their teeth regularly end up with bleeding gums, which provide an entry to the bloodstream for up to 700 different types of bacteria found in our mouths. This increases the risk of having a heart attack, according to microbiologists from the University of Bristol and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland

Dr Steve Kerrigan from the Royal College of Surgeons in Dublin said:

'If you have an open blood vessel from bleeding gums, bacteria will gain entry to your bloodstream. When bacteria get into the bloodstream they encounter platelets that clot blood when you get a cut. By sticking to the platelets, bacteria cause them to clot inside the blood vessel, partially blocking it.'

This prevents the blood flow back to the heart and we run the risk of suffering a heart attack.'

Professor Howard Jenkinson from the University of Bristol said:

'Cardiovascular disease is currently the biggest killer in the western world. Oral bacteria such as Streptococcus Sanguinis are common infecting agents, and we now recognise that bacterial infections are an independent risk factor for heart diseases. In other words it doesn't matter how fit, slim or healthy you are, you're adding to your chances of getting heart disease by having bad gums'

The good news is that, for the vast majority of patients, the successful treatment of gum disease is straight forward; it involves the thorough, daily removal of the soft plaque from around the gum line with a good brushing and flossing technique.

Dr Paul Downes
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