

Did you know...

Poor oral health is connected to poor overall health



Be sure to visit your medical and dental providers regularly



The Wisconsin Oral Health Coalition Alerts Consumers in Correlations to Mouth and Body Connection

Milwaukee, Wis. – In recent years, medical professionals have begun to see a large correlation between oral health and overall health, including the mind and body. Before this holistic approach paying attention to the mouth and body connection, doctors rarely sent patients to a dentist for conditions like heart disease or diabetes. Now, though, it is apparent that proper dental hygiene and regular dental checkups can greatly improve quality of life for those with diabetes, heart disease, or many other chronic conditions that can be tied back to poor oral hygiene.

There is a strong correlation between heart disease and gum disease. Studies have found 91 percent of patients with heart disease also have severe gum disease. These two conditions can be influenced by tobacco use, an unhealthy diet, and staying overweight. Inflammation from gum disease causes inflammation in blood vessels, which can increase the chance of heart attack or stroke. This is because inflamed blood vessels prevent blood from flowing easily through the veins, causing high blood pressure. The chance that fatty plaque will break away from an inflamed blood vessel and travel to the brain or heart increases as a result of gum disease as well. Inflammation caused by gum disease (periodontal disease) can alter the way your body manages blood sugar. Periodontal disease further complicates diabetes because the inflammation impairs the body's ability to utilize insulin. Smoking prevents your gums from fighting infections, and even receiving successful treatment. Rheumatoid arthritis has shown to be reduced once gum disease is treated. Gum infections can even increase the severity of some conditions such as pneumonia.

The Wisconsin Oral Health Coalition (WOHC) is an organization representing more than 200 individuals and agencies that works to improve the oral health of all Wisconsin residents. The WOHC wishes to thank Oral Health American and the Wisdom Tooth Project for this message in their work to improve the health of older adults. For more information about the WOHC visits www.chawisconsin.org/wohc



The Wisconsin Oral Health Coalition Encourages Dental Visits for Pregnant Women

Milwaukee, Wis. – In recent years, medical professionals have begun to see a large correlation between oral health and overall health. The mouth is a gateway to the rest of the body. The connection between the mouth and body has been a huge topic of conversation for the past decade. Before this holistic approach took root, doctors and dentists rarely encouraged pregnant women to seek dental care during their pregnancy.

Many factors contribute to the health of a pregnancy, and many research studies show a connection between gum infections and pregnancy complications. Severe gum disease can alter hormone balance, which can increase the risk for pregnant women of dental caries. Untreated dental caries can lead to infection and inflammation that affects a fetus' development as well. While once thought that providing dental care to pregnant women during pregnancy increased health risks for the fetus, it is now believed not providing treatment provides a bigger risk to mother and fetus.

One sure way for pregnant women to assure they are taking care of their mouth is to seek a preventive care appointment by an oral health care professional. A traditional dental cleaning or dental prophylaxis appointment can assure the gums and teeth are in good health and recommendations can be made to correct any problems that may exist.

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The Wisconsin Oral Health Coalition Alerts Consumers about the Link between Diabetes and Oral Health

Milwaukee, Wis. – When seeing a diabetic patient, a doctor or dentist may mention the term Hemoglobin A1c (HbA1c) when referring to tests that monitor blood sugar levels. It can be a real challenge to keep up with the true meaning of all of these values, so the Wisconsin Oral Health Coalition would like to answer some frequently asked questions regarding HbA1c. Monitoring HbA1c is an important part of diabetes care, which can impact oral health as well as overall health.

The HbA1c value is an average of blood sugar control over a two to three month period. The higher a HbA1c level, the more glucose is bound to blood cells. A high HbA1c may be a warning sign of diabetes as well as how well or poorly the body is handling sugars.

It is important to discuss diabetic status and control of diabetes with an oral health professional. Depending on the severity of the diabetes, one could be at risk of gum disease, dry mouth, fungal infections, tooth decay, mouth ulcers and the healing process may be slower after a dental surgery such as tooth extractions. Maintaining a target HbA1c as advised by a doctor can lower the risk for these oral complications. This is not only beneficial for one's oral health but is an important part in maintaining overall health.

The American Diabetes Association recommends that those with diabetes should have their HbA1c levels measured by a physician at least twice per year. Every person with diabetes is different, but typically a physician will want a target HbA1c lower than 6.5 percent. Individuals without diabetes usually have HbA1c levels between about 4 percent and 5.6 percent. However, individuals with an HbA1c between 5.7 percent and 6.4 percent might be at risk for development of diabetes.

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The Wisconsin Oral Health Coalition Works to Alert Older Adults to the Risk of Sleep Apnea

Milwaukee, Wis. – The term sleep apnea has recently appear on news stories online and talked about with oral health providers. It’s a dangerous condition, and one that cannot be taken lightly.

Sleep apnea is a disorder known for causing pauses in breathing during sleep. The most common type of sleep apnea, obstructive sleep apnea, is caused by an over relaxation of throat muscles that blocks proper airflow and causes brief moments where one stop breathing. These brief pauses in breathing force the brain to elevate the heart rate to maintain proper oxygen levels, which lead to several other changes in your body that contribute to poor breathing and increased carbon dioxide levels. This can lead to more serious, long-term issues such as high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke.

The most common symptoms of sleep apnea include snoring, waking up feeling tired, frequent nighttime waking, morning headaches, difficulty concentrating and excessive daytime sleepiness. In addition to overall body symptoms, a person with sleep apnea can also have dental symptoms.

The number one symptom of sleep apnea is jaw pain and is caused by temporomandibular joint disorders, more commonly known as TMJ or TMD. Other dental signs of sleep apnea include cracked, broken worn or missing teeth, excessive grinding, chronic headaches and neck and shoulder pain.

If one notices any of the signs of sleep apnea, or if one experiences TMJ-like symptoms, the first step one should take is to see a physician or oral health professional. An oral health professional plays vital role in watching out for signs of potential health problems. By identifying medical or dental symptoms of sleep apnea, consumers can decrease risk factors that contribute to other chronic health conditions.

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