

## “Mouth is gateway to body’s health”

(TBN Weekly, January 2011) Your dentist is often the first health practitioner to notice signs of disease in your body.

From heart disease to diabetes or arthritis to cancer, the dentist can spot indicators in your mouth that send up a red flag about your overall health. There is a direct correlation between the effects of periodontal disease (gum disease) and the health of the entire body.

Periodontal disease is caused by a bacterial infection, which damages the gums and bones around the teeth. The bacteria in the gums can travel to many areas of the body where it can have detrimental effects. Plaque is the main cause of gum disease but the dentist can easily treat it.

The oral cavity provides a direct access through the blood stream to the heart. A study in the Journal of Periodontology found periodontal bacteria in the arteries of nine out of 15 patients with coronary artery disease.

Patients with diabetes should talk to their dentist about special needs they may have. Individuals with poorly controlled type two diabetes are more likely to have periodontal disease. One study on diabetic patients found an improved blood sugar count of as much as 20 percent after treatment for periodontal disease.

Proper dental care is important for those who suffer from arthritis. A recent study showed people with rheumatoid arthritis were more than twice as likely to have periodontal disease.

Finally, studies show that pregnant women with periodontal disease may be at an increased risk for a pre-term delivery.

If you fall into one of these categories or have sore gums that bleed when brushing than you should see your dentist routinely. Working together, your concerns can be handled putting your mind at ease. The good news is periodontal disease is treatable and with regular brushing and flossing a person can improve the overall health of their entire body.