

# Periodontal Disease and Cardiovascular Health

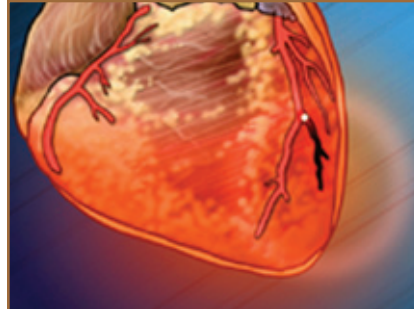
Researchers have discovered that if you have periodontal disease, you may have an increased risk of coronary heart disease, stroke, and infective endocarditis.

## What is periodontal disease?

Periodontal disease is an infection of the teeth, gums, and bone that surrounds your teeth. It's caused by the bacteria that live in plaque, the sticky film of food and bacteria that forms constantly on your teeth. The bacteria infect the tooth roots and cause pockets of infection to form in the gums. This results in red and swollen gums that bleed when you brush or floss.



*Microscopic view of plaque*



*Your heart may be affected*



*Professional cleanings are key*

## The connection to cardiovascular health

Even with early periodontal disease, bleeding gums can create an open doorway that allows harmful bacteria to enter your bloodstream. More advanced periodontal disease can be even worse. It can be compared to a nine-square-inch open wound around your teeth, offering significant opportunity for harmful bacteria to enter your blood.

Research indicates that the bacteria associated with periodontal disease may cause inflammation in the arteries. This inflammation could lead to the buildup of fatty deposits and the formation of blood clots that can block your arteries and even trigger a heart attack.

These deposits may also build up in the carotid arteries in your neck. In serious cases, if these fat deposits break apart and are carried away in your bloodstream, they can lodge in your brain, block a blood vessel, and cause a stroke.

Additionally, some studies have also shown that when plaque bacteria enter the bloodstream through infected gums, you may develop a heart condition called infective endocarditis. This is a potentially fatal bacterial infection that inflames the sac around the heart, the valves of the heart, and the heart muscle itself.

So, as you can see, it's vital to your overall health, as well as your oral health, to keep your gums healthy. If we determine that you have periodontal disease, we'll see you for frequent professional cleanings and recare appointments, and we'll work with you to create a suitable oral hygiene routine.