A Healthy Mouth Keeps Your Heart Happy

You already have a cheap and powerful weapon against heart attacks, strokes and other heart disease conditions. It’s your toothbrush.\(^1\)

Is your mouth trying to tell you something about your health—particularly, about your cardiovascular health? Did you know that some oral health conditions, such as cavities and gingivitis, can be a predictor of future heart problems? It’s true; the state of your teeth and gums may impact more than just your oral health.

Take good care of your teeth and gums—your heart could depend on it.
Good oral health is vital to a heart-healthy lifestyle

According to the American Academy of Periodontology, those with gingivitis—a mild form of gum disease—are almost twice as likely to also have heart disease.\(^1\) Over time, gum disease can increase the risk for heart attacks and strokes.

Here’s why: plaque and tartar build-up on teeth can cause gingivitis. The result: irritation, redness and inflammation of your gums. Harvard Medical School found that inflammation in the mouth can cause inflammation throughout the body—including in the arteries—which can lead to a heart attack or stroke.\(^2\)

Additionally, a recent study in the *Journal of the American Heart Association* reported that those with higher blood levels of disease-causing oral bacteria are more likely to have atherosclerosis—a hardening of the arteries—in the neck which can lead to a stroke.\(^1\)

How to lower your risk

To maintain good oral health and avoid gum disease, you should:

- Get your teeth professionally cleaned twice a year
- Brush and floss your teeth well every day
- Make sure to remove and clean your dentures nightly and have them checked annually for proper fit
- Inform your dentist if you have a heart condition and any medications you take, as it could affect your dental treatment

To learn more, contact your CareFirst account executive.

---