



## Heart Disease and Oral Health Fact Sheet

OCTOBER 2017

### The Challenge...

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for people of most ethnicities in the United States, including African Americans, Hispanics, and Whites. For American Indians or Alaska Natives and Asians or Pacific Islanders, heart disease is second only to cancer.<sup>1</sup> Oral infections, like gum disease, increase the risk of future heart disease. There is an even higher increase in people under 65.<sup>2</sup>

### What you need to know...

- Heart disease can describe conditions that include blood vessel diseases, such as coronary artery disease; heart rhythm problems (arrhythmias); and heart defects you're born with (congenital heart defects), among others.
- Some studies show that bacteria in the mouth from gum disease can move into the bloodstream, which can increase the risk of heart disease and stroke. Once there, bacteria can clump onto blood vessel walls and form plaques or calcifications that clog arteries and can lead to a heart attack and stroke.
- In addition, bone loss that is the result of gum disease, has been associated with increased risk for Acute Cardiovascular Disease (ACVD).<sup>3</sup>

### Footnotes:

1. <http://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/facts.htm>
2. <http://www.bmj.com/content/340/bmj.c2451.full>
3. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jcpe.12089/full>

### Ways You Can Help...

- Brush teeth thoroughly twice a day with a soft bristled toothbrush and fluoridated toothpaste.
- Floss once a day.
- Have teeth cleaned by a dental professional every 6 months.
- Tell your dental provider about your health, especially if you have a history of heart attack or stroke, and about any changes to your medications.
- If you have gum disease, tell your medical provider and consider lifestyle changes (i.e. quit smoking, eat healthy food, and exercise).



**For more information, contact Office of Oral Health**

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