

Can Our General Health Be Predicted by Our Oral Health?

By Norman J. Pomerance, D.D.S

It seems that almost every week there is a news article concerning the relationship of inflammation in our bodies and how it is related to various diseases and cancers. It also is apparent that the most recent research available compares the level of inflammation in our mouths to that found in the rest of our bodies. There are now many common diseases and quite a few cancers that have been found to be directly related to inflammation that originated in our mouths. Heart disease is the most prevalent condition that has been attributed to bacteria found in the mouth; in fact, this bacteria has been found inside the heart vessels which had blockages and caused heart attacks. In an effort to keep inflammation in our mouth to a minimum, it is important that we strive to have excellent oral hygiene habits and have any gum disease present found and treated.

The first step to find out if you have any periodontal (gum and bone) problems is to have a thorough examination by your dentist. This exam will determine if there are any gum conditions that have the potential to cause inflammation. If pockets around the teeth are found, there will be a recommendation for treatment to reduce or eliminate them. If the pocket is deep enough, not only does it indicate the probability of bone loss in that area, but also that there is bacteria in the base of the pocket that must be removed in order for the area to heal.

The treatment suggested may require various procedures including: Scaling and Root Planing which removes the disease-causing bacteria from below the gumline, antibiotic placement in the base of the pocket as an adjunct treatment to help with the reduction of the pocket depths and control the infection, and irrigation of the pockets with a plaque reducing medication..

In addition, your dentist may suggest specific dental products to be used at home to help keep the disease and the inflammation from returning. In conjunction with your home care, multiple maintenance appointments throughout the year, usually at three- four month intervals, are recommended in order to prevent the harmful bacteria from returning. Periodontal disease is a recurring process and must be managed and controlled.

Dr. Pomerance has been practicing general and cosmetic dentistry for over 33 years and is knowledgeable about the latest techniques, advances, and trends in his field. He may be reached at 940 382-3530.