Heart Diseases and Your Gums

Your checklist

- Quit smoking
- Reduce salt, sugar and total calorie intake
- Cut down food high in cholesterol, saturated fat and trans-fatty acids
- Eat more food with low saturated fat and high fibre
- Control your weight
- Engage in daily physical activity
- Brush twice a day with fluoride toothpaste using a soft toothbrush
- Floss your teeth every day to clean difficult-to-reach areas
- Look for early signs of gum disease
- Visit your dentist at least once a year and have your gums checked
- Follow your dentist’s instructions to control your gum disease
- Take prescribed medications as advised by your doctor

If you have one or more risk factors for heart disease, your dentist may refer you to a doctor for a medical check-up.

What can your dental healthcare provider do to manage your gum disease if you have a heart disease?

Your dentist provides the standard treatment to control plaque and gum inflammation. This includes:

- Oral hygiene instruction
- Recommendation of plaque controlling toothpaste and mouthrinse
- Advise on cleaning between adjoining teeth
- Removal of calculus/tartar

Further information

Dental Practice Education Research Unit
ARCPOH, School of Dentistry,
The University of Adelaide, SA 5005
Phone (08) 8313 4045 Fax (08) 8313 4858
Website www.arcpoh.adelaide.edu.au/dperu

Cutting down sugar decreases the risk of heart diseases.

Quitting smoking
Phone Quitline 137 848 (13 QUIT)
Heart Diseases and Your Gums

Heart diseases are the main cause of death in Australia contributing to over 16% of deaths in 2007. Infections in the mouth are historically connected to general ill-health. The association between gum (periodontal) disease and heart diseases has been a hot topic among researchers in the recent past.

What is gum disease?
- Gum disease affects gums, bone and other supporting tissues of teeth
- Dental plaque, which is a sticky colourless film of bacteria build-up on the teeth, is the major cause of gum disease
- Long-standing gum disease can result in tooth loss

Early signs of gum disease:
- Bleeding gums
- Red, swollen or tender gums
- Persistent bad breath

Risk factors
Heart diseases and gum disease share many risk factors.
- Smoking
- Diabetes
- Age
- Sex
- Ethnicity
- Socioeconomic status
- Stress
- Obesity

Smoking, diabetes, stress and obesity can be modified through lifestyle changes to prevent and control heart diseases as well as gum disease.

What can you do to prevent both gum and heart diseases?
- Quit smoking
- Cut down salt and sugar intake
- Cut down total calorie intake
- Reduce eating foods high in cholesterol, saturated fat and trans-fatty acids
- Eat more foods containing low saturated fat and high fibre