

# ***Health Risks Associated with Periodontal Disease***

*Until recently periodontal disease was thought to affect only the gum tissue, teeth and jaw bone. It was thought that the germs that collected below the gum line and caused the infection known as periodontal disease remained on the roots of the teeth and did not spread to other areas of the body. We now know this is incorrect. Recent research has shown that the germs that cause gum disease do spread through the blood stream to other parts of the body and cause the potential for serious health risks like heart disease, stroke and pulmonary infection.*

## **Health Risks**

**1Heart Disease-** *Research studies have shown that people with periodontal disease are twice as likely to have coronary artery disease than those without gum disease. The germs that cause gum disease are thought to build-up on the fatty deposits within the heart blood vessels making blood flow more difficult and potentially starving the heart muscle of the blood it needs to function. The end result is a greater risk of heart attack.*

**2Stroke-** *Researchers have recently found an association between gum disease and stroke. It is thought that when bacteria from periodontal disease enters the blood stream it can build-up on the inner lining of blood vessels to the brain and restrict the flow of blood. This can make a stroke more likely. One recent study shows people with periodontal disease to be twice as likely to have a stroke than those without gum disease.*

**3Respiratory Diseases-** *It is now thought that bacteria found in the mouth can be inhaled into the lungs and cause infection or worsen already existing infections. People with Chronic*

*Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, (COPD), are thought to have more frequent episodes of infection when germs from periodontal disease are inhaled from the mouth. It has also been established that bacteria from a mouth infected by periodontal disease can be inhaled and cause pneumonia.*

**4Diabetes-** *It has been known for some time that people with diabetes are more susceptible to periodontal disease. We are now finding out periodontal disease makes it harder for diabetics to control their blood sugar. Advanced periodontal disease can elevate blood sugar, exposing the diabetic to higher risk. It is recommended that anyone with diabetes and periodontal disease should seek treatment to eliminate the periodontal infection and control the diabetes.*

**5Osteoporosis-** *Osteoporosis decreases the density of the bone. If a periodontal infection is attacking the bone and the bone is weakened by osteoporosis, the bone damage will be accelerated. It is now believed that estrogen therapy can slow down the loss of bone density decreasing the potential damage from periodontal disease.*

**6Pregnancy Complications-** *New research shows that pregnant women with periodontal disease have a seven (7) times higher occurrence of low birth weight babies. These babies are born too early and too small. The theory is that periodontal disease activates certain biological chemicals that induce premature labor.*

## **1Remember**

*You can protect your teeth and your health by being evaluated for periodontal disease. It's treatable and preventable!*