

Answers to questions consumers ask about periodontal disease (periodontitis and gingivitis), compiled by the American Academy of Periodontology....

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Frequently Asked Questions About Periodontal (Gum) Disease and General Health



Periodontal Disease is linked to Respiratory & Heart disease, Premature Births and Diabetics.

- ▶ [List of Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- ▶ [Periodontal Procedures FAQ](#)

Links to Other Diseases

What is the relationship between periodontal disease and respiratory disease?

More research is needed to confirm how periodontal disease may put people at increased risk for respiratory disease. What we do know is that mouth infections like periodontal disease are associated with increased risk of respiratory infection. An analysis of research has revealed that periodontal (gum) disease may be a far more serious threat to your health than previously realized.

- ▶ [More about periodontal disease and respiratory disease.](#)

How does periodontal disease increase my risk for heart disease?

Several theories exist to explain the link between periodontal disease and heart disease. One theory is that oral bacteria can affect the heart when they enter the bloodstream, attaching to fatty plaques in the coronary arteries (heart blood vessels) and contributing to clot formation. Coronary artery disease is characterized by a thickening of the walls of the coronary arteries due to the buildup of fatty proteins. Blood clots can obstruct normal blood flow, restricting the amount of nutrients and oxygen required for the heart to function properly. This may lead to heart attacks. Researchers have found that people with periodontal disease are almost twice as likely to suffer from coronary artery disease as those without periodontal disease.

- ▶ [More about periodontal disease and heart disease.](#)
- ▶ [View a free AAP brochure sample on periodontal and heart disease.](#)

Can periodontal disease increase my risk for having a premature baby?

Pregnant women who have periodontal disease may be seven times more likely to have a baby that is born too early and too small. More research is needed to confirm how periodontal disease may affect pregnancy outcomes. What we do know is that periodontal disease is an infection and all infections are cause for concern during pregnancy because they pose a risk to the health of the baby. If you are thinking about becoming pregnant, be sure to include an evaluation with a periodontist as part of your prenatal care.

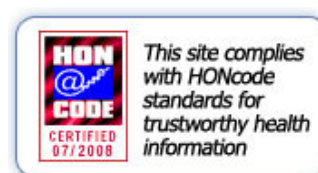
- ▶ [More about pregnancy and periodontal disease.](#)
- ▶ [Periodontal disease at other stages of a woman's life.](#)
- ▶ [More information about premature births at March of Dimes Web site](#)

What is the relationship between periodontal disease and diabetes?

For years we've known that people with diabetes are more likely to have periodontal disease than people without diabetes. Recently, research has emerged suggesting that the relationship goes both ways – periodontal disease may make it more difficult for people who have diabetes to control their blood sugar. Though more research is needed, what we do know is that severe periodontal disease can increase blood sugar, putting diabetics at increased risk for complications. If you are among the 16 million Americans who live with diabetes or are at risk for

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diabetes or periodontal disease, see a periodontist for an evaluation.

- ▶ [More about periodontal disease and diabetes.](#)

What can I do to reduce the health risks associated with periodontal disease?

Sometimes the only way to detect periodontal disease is through a periodontal evaluation. If you value your oral health as well as your overall health, a periodontal evaluation is a good idea—especially if you notice any [symptoms of periodontal disease](#); have heart disease, diabetes, respiratory disease or osteoporosis; are thinking of becoming pregnant; have a family member with periodontal disease; or have a sore or irritation in your mouth that does not get better within two weeks.

- ▶ [Do a self-assessment of your risk for periodontal disease.](#)
- ▶ [Schedule an evaluation with a periodontist in your area.](#)