

## Working Together for Healthy Gums and a Healthy Heart

Gum disease and cardiovascular disease are both major public health issues that impact a large number of Americans every day. While these two diseases impact separate areas of the body, research indicates that periodontal disease and cardiovascular disease are connected; having one disease may actually increase your risk of developing the other.

### Inflammation's Role

Periodontal disease and cardiovascular disease are both considered chronic inflammatory conditions. Inflammation is the body's instinctive reaction to fight off infection. Inflammation is initially good for your body because it helps in the healing process. However, chronic and prolonged inflammation can lead to severe health complications. Researchers believe that inflammation provides the basis for the connection between gum disease and heart disease<sup>1</sup>. And now, periodontists and those who treat cardiovascular disease are working together to provide the best care to patients.

### The Perio-Cardio Connection

In July 2009, a consensus paper<sup>2</sup> was published in both the *Journal of Periodontology* and *The American Journal of Cardiology*. The paper was jointly developed by periodontists and cardiologists. Periodontists are dentists with advanced training in the treatment

and prevention of periodontal disease, and cardiologists are doctors who specialize in treating diseases of the heart. The paper summarizes the evidence that links periodontal disease and cardiovascular disease, and provides clinical recommendations for periodontists and cardiologists to use in managing their patients living with, or at risk for, either disease.

### What does this Mean for You?

You might be surprised when your periodontist now asks even more questions about your medical history, especially questions about your family history of heart disease and any behaviors that may affect your heart health such as smoking. Your cardiologist may start to ask you about your dental history and might even look in your mouth to evaluate your teeth and gums! These new recommendations are intended to help periodontists and cardiologists better manage your risk factors for future disease progression, and ensure your well-being. Hopefully by working together with your periodontist to ensure healthy teeth and gums, you will also ensure a healthy heart throughout your entire life.

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of Periodontology*. August 2008, Vol. 79, No. 8s, Pages 1501-1614.

<sup>2</sup> V Friedewald, K Kornman, J Beck, et al. Editors' Consensus: Periodontitis and Atherosclerotic Cardiovascular Disease. *Journal of Periodontology*. July 2009, Vol. 80, No. 7, Pages 1021-1032.



### Brush to Prevent Heart Disease?

Since several studies have suggested a link between periodontal disease and cardiovascular disease, it is more important than ever to take care of your teeth and gums! Brush your teeth twice each day, as well as floss once each day. It is also important to see your dental professional for routine check-ups. To learn more about gum disease, visit [perio.org](http://perio.org).

The American Academy of Periodontology Patient Page is a public service of the AAP and should not be used as a substitute for the care and advice of your personal periodontist. There may be variations in treatment that your periodontist will recommend based on individual facts and circumstances. Call 1-800-FLOSS-EM or visit [perio.org](http://perio.org) for more information on periodontal disease.