Mouthing Off

What docs say about oral health and heart disease

February 26, 2015 By Kate Ferguson

Scientists haven't proved that oral problems cause diseases elsewhere in the body, but researchers believe there's a possible connection between the two. After scientists evaluated patients with periodontitis, a serious gum infection, they learned that chewing food and brushing teeth released bacteria into patients' bloodstreams—the same bacteria in arterial plaque that can lead to heart attacks.

But a statement from the American Heart Association reports there's no conclusive evidence that preventing or treating gum disease can reduce plaque buildup in coronary arteries that can contribute to a heart attack or stroke.

Says Ann F. Bolger, MD, a spokesperson for the American Heart Association, "People with periodontitis often have risk factors that not only put their mouth at risk, but their heart and blood vessels too. But whether one causes the other has not actually been shown."

Doctors suggest that for the sake of our overall health, signs of periodontal disease—such as red, swollen, tender gums, or gums that pull away from your teeth or bleed when you brush—require immediate treatment. And always tell your dentist if you have heart problems.

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http://beta.docker.realhealthmag.com/article/oral-health-heart-disease-26868-9638