

Dental care helps to prevent heart attacks and strokes

Fredericton, NB - April 12, 2011 - It's not normally painful and it's not easily visible, but gum disease (periodontal disease) can kill you.

According to the Canadian Academy of Periodontology, three out of every four Canadians suffer from some form of periodontal disease.

"People don't often seek treatment for gum disease because they are not aware of the long-term, and potentially dangerous, implications of periodontal disease," said Dr. Larry Peacocke, President of the NB Dental Society. "People with periodontal disease (ranging from mild gingivitis to the more severe form known as periodontitis) have a significantly greater risk for heart disease, stroke and even diabetes."

People with gum disease have twice the risk of having a fatal heart attack as those without the disease. The bacteria that cause gum disease may enter the blood stream and form small blood clots that can contribute to clogged arteries and the build-up of fatty deposits. The inflammation caused by periodontal disease may increase the amount of fatty plaques contributing to the narrowing of the arteries. Either way, the result is that blood flow is restricted, the heart is deprived of nutrients and oxygen, and this leads to heart attacks.

Bleeding gums and bone loss around the teeth are an early indicator of diabetes. Treatment of periodontal disease can help reduce the risk of developing diabetes. For diabetics, treatment can help control their blood sugar levels.

Periodontal disease can have profound implications for your overall health. Visiting the dentist at least annually may help save your life. The dentist can detect gum disease and provide treatment that, combined with good oral hygiene, may help prevent fatal diseases like heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

April is Oral Health Month and the New Brunswick Dental Society is participating with a public education campaign highlighting the message "Not everybody can see it. But your Dentist can."

The New Brunswick Dental Society exists to promote professional growth, high ethical standards and quality care giving through communication, education and the regulation of dentistry in New Brunswick.