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Dear Patient:

I hope that this information about the link between Heart Disease, Gum Disease and Tooth Loss will be of some benefit to you.

More than 50% of all adults in the U.S. have some form of gum disease, beginning with gingivitis. Studies have proven that "fatty deposits lodged in the *carotid arteries of stroke sufferers* shows that *70% contain bacteria and 40% of that bacteria comes from the mouth.*" The best way I can explain the connection it is to say that *gum disease is definitely a chronic infection, and the bacteria in this infection can certainly travel throughout your body!*

Some cardiac patients can go from "My gums bleed a little bit when I brush" to "My tooth feels loose, and I have a bad taste in my mouth" much more quickly than people who have their heart disease under control. Subsequent *tooth loss can contribute to poor nutrition, and then possibly to clogged arteries and stroke.*

I have found that the more my patients know about the connection between dental problems and medical problems, the more motivated they are to prevent complications. I am lucky to have patients who are smart enough to realize that neglecting things too long may only lead to taking out a tooth, or teeth.

Then they are faced with a big project like a bridge or implant to replace the missing tooth or teeth.

Many of my patients whose heart disease is under control have healthy gums, because they are extremely dedicated to brushing and flossing well at home (ask us about our Proxabrush), and keep up with seeing our dental hygienist every 3 to 4 months.

If our otherwise healthy patients see the hygienist every six months, and they don't have the complications of medications, then it makes sense that they may need more frequent cleaning to prevent the bleeding gums that lead to tooth loss.

There also is the issue of how your cardiac medications can lead to what I like to call "Dry Mouth Syndrome" (especially that "water pill" and the calcium channel blockers like Cardizem and Norvasc). This can make you more susceptible to cavities in between the teeth. *We do fluoride treatments for adults after every cleaning*, just like we do for the children we treat to prevent these cavities.

So here is another question: Does controlling your heart disease help prevent severe gum disease, or do frequent cleanings, healthy gums, and fluoride help control your heart disease? This time I can say that I do have the answers: YES and YES.

In order to avoid further medical complications, and to avoid losing teeth from your gum disease or cavities, here's my best advice:

- See your medical doctor regularly
- Follow their diet/nutrition and exercise instructions
- Take your medication as it is prescribed
- Be aware of "Dry Mouth Syndrome"
- Brush, floss, and/or Proxabrush daily
- See the dental hygienist every 3 to 4 months.
- Be preventive with fluoride treatments and rinses at home.

If you need any further information about this, or would like additional copies of this report, please let me know. I would also be willing to speak to any group or organization you are in, if the group is interested.

Thanks for your attention. We are committed to recognizing the connection between medicine and dentistry in our office, because our smart patients are our best patients.

Dr. James Rodriguez