



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Healthy Smile, Healthy Body** *Oral Health Can Offer Window to Overall Good Health*

OAK BROOK, IL (Date) -- Just as your eyes are windows to your soul, can your smile be a window to your health? Oral health experts think so.

Although researchers aren't sure one causes the other, when someone has an oral health problem such as periodontal disease, it can suggest the need to take a closer look at the patient's overall health.

"A number of studies show an association between periodontal diseases and systemic conditions," says Max Anderson, DDS, a national oral health advisor for Delta Dental Plans Association. "In most cases, cause and effect have not been convincingly demonstrated, but the presence of periodontal diseases can signal the presence of other health issues."

Sometimes the early signs of a disease are visible to dentists when patients open wide.<sup>1</sup> People with lesions or sores inside their mouths may be suffering from viral infections in their lungs, for example. Similarly, patients with unpleasantly sensitive teeth or showing a chemical erosion of tooth enamel may be the victims of acid reflux or hiatal hernia conditions, where sufferers repeatedly burp bile into their mouths.

In other cases, health researchers have found the state of a patient's oral health to be associated with a number of systemic conditions, such as diabetes and circulatory problems.

Periodontal disease is more common among people with diabetes. Young adults with diabetes are about twice as likely to suffer from periodontal disease than those without diabetes. In fact, almost one-third of people with diabetes have severe periodontal disease. Periodontal disease

progresses more rapidly and is more difficult to treat in people with uncontrolled or poorly controlled diabetes than in people without diabetes.<sup>2</sup>

Another research study found that patients with periodontal disease and fewer teeth than those without periodontal disease may have an increased risk of suffering a stroke, a circulatory problem where there is a lack of blood supply in the brain.<sup>3</sup>

Regardless of whether researchers establish direct cause and effect relationships between oral health problems and other health issues, dentists place their emphasis on protecting and promoting oral health for the overall well being of their patients.

“The good news is the precautions dentists and oral health professionals recommend people take to protect their teeth, gums and mouth aren't harmful. So, there is no harm to stepping up your hygiene habits to improve oral health and maybe do your body some good too,” says Dr. Anderson.

Delta Dental Plans Association, based in Oak Brook, IL, is a national network of independent not-for-profit dental service corporations specializing in providing dental benefits programs to 50 million Americans in more than 88,000 employee groups throughout the country.

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1. Steven L. Bricker, Robert P. Langlais, and Craig S. Miller, *Oral Diagnosis, Oral Medicine and Treatment Planning* (BC Decker, 2002).
2. Massachusetts Department of Public Health, National Guideline Clearinghouse. "Massachusetts Guidelines for Adult Diabetes Care." (Diabetes Prevention and Control Program, Diabetes Guidelines Work Group, June 2005)
3. KJ Joshipura, HC Hung, EB Rimm, WC Willett, A. Ascherio. "Periodontal Disease, Tooth Loss, and Incidence of Ischemic Stroke." (Stroke: A Journal of Cerebral Circulation, January 2003)