



Heart health

February

Can brushing your teeth affect your heart health?

When you brush your teeth, normal bacteria can be introduced into the blood stream through your mouth and gums. If bacteria lodge in the heart's inner lining or valves, it can lead to an uncommon infection called endocarditis.

Risk factors for endocarditis in adults include:

- > Previous valve surgeries or transplants
- > Calcium buildup in the mitral or aortic valve
- > Congenital heart defects or a history of endocarditis

Good oral health and regular dentist visits are especially important for patients at risk for endocarditis. Floss and rinse with an antiseptic mouthwash once a day, and brush and rinse with water twice a day.

Sources: American Heart Association and Mayo Clinic

Trivia time:

How much bacteria lives in the human mouth?

Answer: "In one mouth, the number of bacteria can easily exceed the number of people who live on Earth," says one Harvard scientist.

Tell your dentist about any heart issues

Your dentist needs information to choose the best treatments and medications for your dental procedures. That's especially true if you have preexisting heart conditions, which can make it easier for your skin and gums to get irritated or inflamed.

Give your dentist a complete medical history, as well as the names and dosages of any medications you are taking, plus contact info for your doctors.

Your dentist should be aware if your body has limits during a procedure, so work together on strategies to control dental pain and ease stress.

Source: Cleveland Clinic

6 ways to beat gum disease & lower your risk of heart disease

Some studies show a connection between oral health and heart health. People with gum disease often have health issues that could put their mouths and their hearts at risk.

Although studies have not confirmed whether one causes the other, both diseases share risk factors, such as smoking and diabetes, and both add to inflammation in the body.

Take these steps to lower your risk:

- > Brush and floss daily
- > Get regular dental checkups
- > Manage your weight
- > Control your blood pressure
- > Eliminate smoking
- > Stay active

Source: American Heart Association