



ORAL HEALTH

Women's Hormones Could Affect Their Oral Health

Women: Your health care needs are unique, and require special care. Taking care of your health also includes oral health because it's an important part of your overall health.

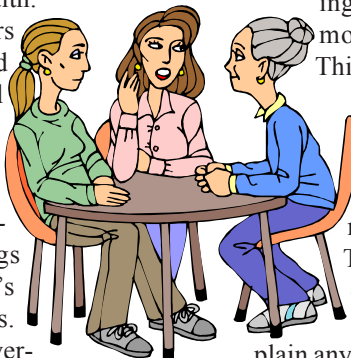
Periodontal researchers are making strides to find out how periodontal diseases may affect women's overall health. Recent issues of the *Journal of Periodontology* published findings that relate to women's unique oral health needs. Following is a brief overview of some of these studies:

• **Menstrual Cycle Affects**

Periodontal Health - Researchers found that many women noticed an increase in gingival inflammation and discomfort associated with their menstrual cycle. This is the first time this well-known phenomenon has been studied.

Symptoms included a slight burning sensation, bleeding with minor irritation, redness to the gums, oral ulcers and discomfort in the gums. Further studies will

be required to examine whether these symptoms will have lasting negative effects. In the meantime, women should tell their dental professionals about changes taking place in the mouth or body.



This includes taking prescription or over-the-counter medications. This way the dental professional can explain any effects it may have on periodontal health.

• **Infertility Treatment and Oral Health**

- Researchers found that women undergoing ovulation induction for infertility treatment for more than three menstrual cycles experience higher gingival inflammation, bleeding and gingival crevicular fluid. (This fluid contains enzymes and tissue products that are potential markers for the progression of periodontitis.) These effects are presumably associated with increased levels of

progesterone and estrogen.

Several studies also provided evidence that the presence of infection is associated with unsuccessful embryo development and implantation failure in in vitro fertilization patients.

Since periodontal disease is a chronic bacterial infection, future studies may determine the effects of periodontal status and periodontal treatment on the outcome of infertility treatment.

• **Pregnancy Complication is Associated with Periodontal Destruction** - The January 2005 *JOP* reported that periodontal inflammation plays a possible role in the development of preeclampsia, a potentially deadly condition that affects approximately five percent of U.S. pregnancies. Researchers found that periodontal disease was more severe in the preeclamptic patients, which suggests an interaction between periodontal disease and pregnancy. In fact, the protein levels of cytokines in the preeclamptic group were nearly three times greater than the healthy group.

Listen Up Ladies: Calcium May Reduce the Risk of Periodontitis

Adults consuming at least three servings of calcium each day have a reason to smile. A study in the *Journal of Periodontology* found that people who get enough calcium have significantly lower rates of periodontal disease, a leading cause of tooth loss. That's because periodontal disease isn't only about gum tissue. The tooth's health depends upon the integrity of the bone holding the tooth in place.

Researchers found that people who intake less than 500 milligrams of calcium, or about half the recommended dietary allowance, were almost twice as likely to have periodontal disease, as

measured by the loss of attachment of the gums from the teeth.

The association was particularly evident for people in their 20s and 30s. The relationship between calcium and periodontal disease is likely due to calcium's role in building density in the bone that supports the teeth.

Calcium alone can't prevent or cure periodontal disease, but it's an important part of an overall prevention or treatment program. Unfortunately, national surveys have shown that many Americans are not consuming enough

calcium, and many women consume less than half of the recommended daily amount of calcium. According to the National Osteoporosis Foundation, women have less bone tissue and lose it more rapidly than men because of the changes involved in menopause.

It's important for women to eat calcium-rich foods and to speak to their healthcare providers about obtaining the proper amount of calcium. This way you can take an active role in helping your smile last a lifetime.

The American Academy of Periodontology Patient Page is a public service of the AAP and should not be used as a substitute for the care and advice of your personal periodontist. There may be variations in treatment that your periodontist will recommend based on individual facts and circumstances. Call 1-800-FLOSS-EM for a free brochure on periodontal disease.

For more information visit www.perio.org