



## A Healthy Mouth Keeps Your Heart Happy

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You already have a cheap and powerful weapon against heart attacks, strokes and other heart disease conditions. It's your toothbrush.<sup>1</sup>

Is your mouth trying to tell you something about your health—particularly, about your cardiovascular health? Did you know that some oral health conditions, such as cavities and gingivitis, can be a predictor of future heart problems? It's true; the state of your teeth and gums may impact more than just your oral health.



*Take good care of your teeth and gums—your heart could depend on it.*

## Good oral health is vital to a heart-healthy lifestyle

According to the American Academy of Periodontology, those with gingivitis—a mild form of gum disease—are almost twice as likely to also have heart disease.<sup>1</sup> Over time, gum disease can increase the risk for heart attacks and strokes.

Here's why: plaque and tartar build-up on teeth can cause gingivitis. The result: irritation, redness and inflammation of your gums. Harvard Medical School found that inflammation in the mouth can cause inflammation throughout the body—including in the arteries—which can lead to a heart attack or stroke.<sup>2</sup>

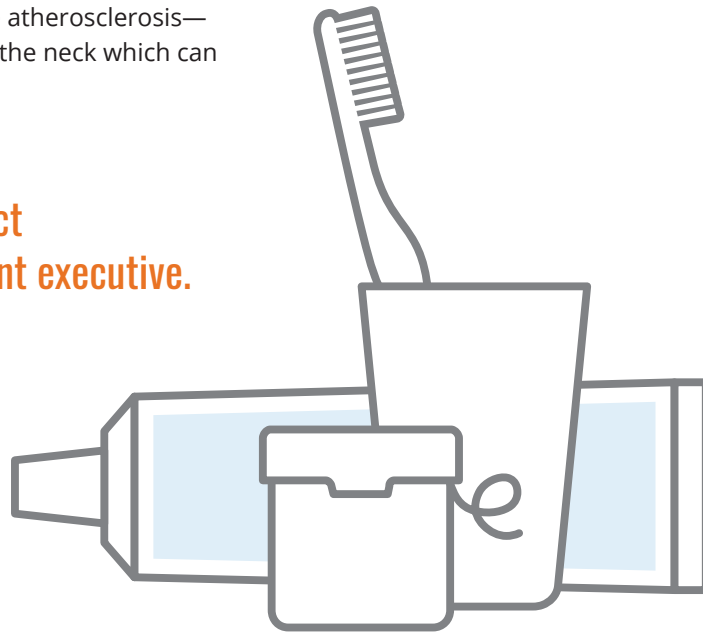
Additionally, a recent study in the *Journal of the American Heart Association* reported that those with higher blood levels of disease-causing oral bacteria are more likely to have atherosclerosis—a hardening of the arteries—in the neck which can lead to a stroke.<sup>1</sup>

To learn more, contact your CareFirst account executive.

## How to lower your risk

To maintain good oral health and avoid gum disease, you should:

- Get your teeth professionally cleaned twice a year
- Brush and floss your teeth well every day
- Make sure to remove and clean your dentures nightly and have them checked annually for proper fit
- Inform your dentist if you have a heart condition and any medications you take, as it could affect your dental treatment



<sup>1</sup> WebMD.com. Periodontal Disease and Heart Health. <http://www.webmd.com/heart-disease/features/periodontal-disease-heart-health>.

<sup>2</sup> Harvard Medical School. Heart disease and oral health: role of oral bacteria in heart plaque. [http://www.health.harvard.edu/press\\_releases/heart-disease-oral-health](http://www.health.harvard.edu/press_releases/heart-disease-oral-health).