

January 16, 2010

In this issue of our newsletter:

Tooth decay, bleeding gums may herald chronic ills

NEW YORK (Reuters Health) - Our modern dental woes have a lot to do with modern whole-body ills like heart disease and diabetes, according to the author of a review of decades' worth of studies on diet and health.

The culprit in both cases? The so-called fermentable carbohydrates forming the foundation of the modern diet, says Dr. Philippe P. Hujoel of the University of Washington School of Dentistry in Seattle. These include sugars and starchy foods that break down into sugars in the mouth, as well as tropical fruits and dried fruits.

Hujoel argues in the *Journal of Dental Research* that gum disease and tooth decay should be seen as "alarm bells" that signal a person is at risk of heart disease, diabetes and other chronic health problems.

In recent years, Hujoel argues, fat has replaced fermentable carbohydrates as the enemy, which has led to the promotion of heavy carbohydrate consumption-and in turn the need for dental interventions like sealant and fluoride to prevent tooth decay.



Studies have shown development of gum disease within days of a person upping their sugar intake, which then improves within weeks of a person cutting out carbs. If such high-fermentable carbohydrate diets continue, Hujoel argues, their associated chronic illnesses take hold.

"Clearly, the dental alarm bell has an extremely low threshold for activation; the response occurs in days, weeks or, at most, years, as opposed to the decades it takes for systemic (diseases) to become clinically apparent," he writes.

Hujoel calls for research to investigate the question of whether diets that are good for our teeth are also good for our overall health. If the answer is yes, he adds, "dental diseases could become increasingly regarded as the early marker of adverse lifestyle choices," and could also offer clues to understanding other systemic illnesses such as Alzheimer's disease.

By: Journal of Dental Research, July 1, 2009.

For Your Better Dental Health:

Dr. Petrosky & Staff

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