



CDA Position on **Association between Periodontal Disease and Systemic Disease**

The Canadian Dental Association recognizes the impact of systemic diseases, such as diabetes and immunocompromised states on the periodontal tissues. A report on oral health ('Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General') released May 25, 2000 supports the possible association between periodontal disease and systemic disease. This report suggests that the signs and symptoms of life-threatening diseases may appear in the mouth long before they show up in other parts of the body.

The Surgeon General's report highlights a bi-directional interaction between oral and systemic health. Systemic conditions noted to occur with oral manifestations include diabetes, cutaneous diseases, hereditary disease, joint disease, immunocompromised states and osteoporosis.

Recent evidence presented in this report, primarily from epidemiological studies, now suggests that there may be an association between periodontitis and certain systemic disorders, notably cardiovascular disease (atherosclerosis, heart attacks and strokes) and complications of pregnancy (pre-term birth and low birthweight infants).

While a number of interactions have been identified, other reviewers suggest no or limited relationship. Therefore, additional research is needed to evaluate disease pathogenesis, relationships to the oral cavity and possible therapeutic interventions.

Dentists and dental specialists are constantly looking for signs and symptoms of these diseases, which can be detected during regular oral health and physical examinations. The Canadian Dental Association recognizes the Surgeon General's report but recommends that further emphasis should be placed on research and educating dentists, physicians, students, residents, other healthcare professionals and most importantly, patients regarding the importance of these possible relationships.

This report places oral health in the perspective of systemic health and suggests that the dental and medical professions need to develop even closer ties in the future.

*Approved
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