

WHAT IS YOUR MOUTH TELLING YOU?

Your mouth reveals more about your overall health than you may have guessed.

More than 90 percent of diseases can show up in the mouth first. In fact, a dentist is often the first medical provider to find and detect health problems. Here are some examples:

HEART DISEASE. Bacteria from the mouth may contribute to the blockage of arteries. Research has found a link between gum disease and heart disease and stroke.

DIABETES RISK. Diabetics are more likely to get mouth infections and gum disease. Oral infections can also make it harder to control diabetes. Dry mouth, a common symptom of diabetes may contribute to recurring decay.

BONE HEALTH. Regular dental exams and X-rays, which show bone loss, can find osteoporosis.

LUNG PROBLEMS. The lower respiratory tract (bronchi and lungs) can draw in bacteria from the throat and mouth. This bacterium can cause infections.

CANCER RISK. Mouth cancer, if caught early, can be treated. If not, it may spread to other parts of the body.

By checking the mouth, a dentist may also see other diseases, such as leukemia, eating disorders, kidneys problems, acid reflux disease and lack of vitamins.

To keep a healthy mouth, brush your teeth twice a day, see a dentist on a regular basis, avoid tobacco and alcohol, and get early treatment to stop or control gum disease. Good dental care can lead to saving on dental costs and medical care. A study by the Journal of Periodontology revealed that healthcare costs were 21 percent higher for patients with severe gum disease than those without gum problems.