

TAKING OWNERSHIP OF YOUR MEDICAL AND DENTAL HEALTH

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PATIENTS WITH ACTIVE ORAL INFECTIONS, CHRONIC PERIODONTAL DISEASE, AND GINGIVITIS

• INFORM YOUR MEDICAL DOCTOR OF YOUR ORAL CONDITION

- Your physician may be unaware of your oral condition or its consequences to their treatment of you.
- Oral infections can present a serious risk to your medical health and negatively impact your entire body.
- You cannot be considered medically healthy if you have untreated oral infections.
- Chronic oral infections like dental abscesses, gum disease, or gingivitis are considered one of the root causes of whole body (systemic) inflammation. Systemic inflammation and its associated lifestyle and chronic disease components account for up to 75% of the nation's healthcare costs.
- Ask your physician to perform an oral screening as part of your physical evaluation; this should include an inspection of your mouth and teeth, identify signs of oral infections including: halitosis, bleeding gums, red/swollen gums, black/brown/yellow debris encrusted in the gingival sulcus, loose teeth, gingival recession or accentuated look to length of teeth, visual root exposure, toothache, broken teeth, gross caries, dental abscess – parulis or cellulitis of upper or lower jaw. Follow-up with your dentist for any positive oral findings.
- *All oral infections should be treated, eliminated, or controlled prior to definitive medical interventions to prevent and reduce risk for related systemic disease sequelae, progression, and duration resulting from oral pathogen sources.* Consider oral pathogen infections as a significant risk factor for cardiovascular disease, chronic kidney disease, chronic respiratory disease, pre-term low birth weight births, oral and pharyngeal cancers, diabetes, hypertension, cerebrovascular disease, ischemic stroke, microvascular dementia, joint and organ transplant infections, rheumatoid arthritis, and bacterial pneumonia.
- *All oral infections should be treated, eliminated, or controlled prior to or in conjunction with pharmacologic control of blood sugar, hyperlipidemia, and hypertension.*
- *All oral infections should be treated, eliminated, or controlled prior to immunosuppressive therapies, or medical / dental surgeries; e.g.: cancer treatment, heart surgery, artificial joint surgery, transplant surgery, etc.*

• MAKE SURE YOUR DENTAL CARE PROVIDERS ARE CORRECTLY DIAGNOSING AND TREATING YOUR ORAL INFECTIONS

- According to the Surgeon General's report on "Oral Health in America" (May 2000), periodontal disease is one of the most prevalent diseases in America yet remains a "silent epidemic". According to the American Dental Association (2008) and Oral Health America: "periodontal disease is both under diagnosed and under treated putting patients at risk for systemic disease". The Levin Group, a worldwide dental industry consulting firm, claims 70% of dentists do not record the parameters necessary to correctly diagnose gum disease. Even though nearly every medical and dental organization, and the Surgeon General agree that 80% of the population have some form of gum disease, dental insurance claim submissions for "prophylaxis" (simple tooth cleaning), which is to be performed only on *healthy gums* to *prevent* disease, out numbers gum disease therapeutic treatment claims by nearly 9 to 1 per JP Consultants.
- Ask your dental hygienist or dentist if they noticed any bleeding from your gums during your dental appointment. If yes, then your gums may be inflamed and infected; it's usually too late for preventive therapy like prophylaxis. Chances are you need some type of definitive gum therapy that is far more thorough and elaborate than a simple tooth cleaning. Remember, the disease in your mouth can jeopardize your overall health.
- *Gum disease is not curable.* Ongoing professional maintenance is required at 3-4 month intervals for the life of the dentition to help stabilize the condition. Many dental insurance benefit plans including Aetna, Cigna, and Delta Dental, now offer *additional* dental services and gum treatment to high-risk individuals such as diabetics, pregnant women, and heart disease patients. Studies have shown a significant reduction in medical costs with early periodontal treatment for these conditions.