

Want to take care of your heart? Don't ignore your teeth!

Does the way to a healthy heart go through your mouth? Well, the answer may surprise you. A 2013 study done on a sample size of 60 people from V.S. General Hospital, Ahmedabad threw some interesting conclusion about poor oral health and heart disease.

The study compared the oral hygiene and periodontal status between 30 patients who suffered from acute myocardial infarction (commonly known as heart attack) and 30 healthy individuals. It found that those who suffered from myocardial infarction had a poor oral health as well as periodontal status compared to the healthy patients. The study was conducted by Dr Sujal Parkar, Dr Gunjan Modi and Dr Jalak Jain of Ahmedabad Dental College.

“Many factors are responsible for myocardial infarction but the conclusion in the study was reached after taking into consideration variables such as age, gender, smoking, body mass index (BMI), hypertension and diabetes mellitus,” said Parkar who at the time of the study was a senior lecturer with the A’bad Dental College

He said the study revealed that those who suffered from heart ailments had a poor oral history. The bacteria that results in the mouth due to periodontal infections can travel to the heart and cause problems.

The oral hygiene status of the case group was significantly poor as compared to the control group in the study. “Many other studies have found the relationship between poor oral health and heart ailments. But this one was perhaps the first to focus on patients in Gujarat as far as I know,” said Parkar.

He added that the study also found that those with poor oral health were twice at risk of heart ailments than a person with good oral health. Dr Girish Parmar, Dean,

Government Dental College, Civil Hospital said that very few people are aware of the relation between a healthy heart and healthy gums. “Most people know about obesity and diabetes as a risk factor for heart ailments. But hardly 1% would know that taking good care of their teeth and gums can help them in protecting their heart,” said Parmar.

He said it is the norm for cardiologists to often refer patients to dentist before a heart surgery to ensure that any oral infection is taken care of. “This is because the presence of such an infection would lead to poor prognosis even if the surgery was a success,” said Dr Parmar.