CONNECTING ORAL HEALTH TO OVERALL HEALTH

A visit to the dentist may be about more than just avoiding cavities – it may save your life or your unborn child’s. Research has linked various health issues and complications to gum disease, including heart disease, stroke, diabetes, pre-term birth and pre-eclampsia for women, as well as other health issues.

“There are numerous studies that link oral health to our overall health,” said Dr. Miles Hall, chief dental clinical director for Cigna. “For example, treating gum disease in individuals with diabetes can result in improvement in blood sugar levels, which may lead to a reduction of the effects of diabetes and its complications.”

Oral health connections include:

Heart disease – The exact link has not yet been pinpointed, but researchers are finding an association between gum disease and an increased risk for heart disease and stroke.

Pregnancy – A study showed that women with gum disease during the second trimester were up to eight times more likely to give birth prematurely.

Head and neck radiation – Head and neck radiation can cause the mouth to be dry which may cause increased risk for tooth decay and gum disease.

Organ transplants – Transplant patients can have an increased risk for systemic and oral infections, including tooth decay and gum disease.

Chronic kidney disease – Researchers found that people with gum disease and those with missing teeth were nearly twice as likely to have chronic kidney disease compared with those without these risk factors.

As a result of this type of research, Cigna created the Cigna Dental Oral Health Integration Program ® which provides enhanced dental coverage for specific dental procedures, prescription and non-prescription discounts and samples, as well as behavioral health information to all of its dental members who may have conditions impacting oral health. Participants’ out-of-pocket costs are reimbursed at 100 percent for certain dental services if they have any of the specified medical conditions. Click for additional information on [the Cigna Dental Oral Health Integration Program](https://www.cigna.com/individuals-families/member-resources/oral-health-integration-program).