

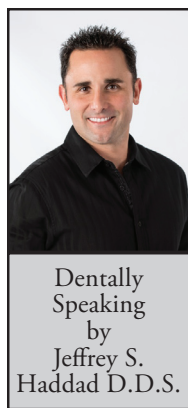
# Your dentist could have more effect on your heart than you thought

The majority of people have the misconception that what occurs in your mouth does not affect the rest of their body. This could not be further from the truth. The same bacteria that can grow in the mouth can and will affect the rest of your body in many adverse ways. In addition, with the growing field of sleep medicine, we now know how dangerous sleep apnea can be and it's direct effect on our body. New research is showing even more reasons why proper oral care and regular

visits to your dentist could be invaluable to your overall health.

## Periodontal (Gum) Disease

Periodontal disease can affect your overall health. Over time, it may increase the risk for heart disease and stroke. Several studies have shown that people with



Dentally Speaking  
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periodontal disease may be more likely to have coronary artery disease than people with healthy mouths.

Right now, scientists have two possible explanations for this association. One is that the bacteria that cause periodontal disease can release toxins into or travel through the bloodstream and help to form fatty plaques in the arter-

ies. These plaque deposits can lead to serious problems, such as blood clots, which can block blood flow. The other explanation is that these bacteria cause the liver to make high levels of certain proteins, which inflame the blood vessels. Inflammation eventually could lead to a heart attack or stroke.

## Symptoms of periodontal disease include:

- **Persistent bad breath**
- **Red, swollen or tender gums**
- **Gums that bleed when you brush your teeth**
- **Gums that have pulled away from the teeth**
- **Loose teeth**
- **A change in the way your teeth come together when you bite down**

## Hidden Tooth Infections

According to a recent study carried out at the University of Helsinki, an infection of the root tip of a tooth increases the risk of coronary artery disease, even if the infection is symptomless. Hidden dental root tip infections are very common. Such infections are usually detected by chance from X-rays (radiographs). Dental root tip infection, or apical periodontitis, is a bodily defense reaction against bacterial infection in the dental pulp. Cavities are the most common cause of dental root tip infection. "Acute coronary syndrome is 2.7 times more common among patients with untreated teeth in need of root canal treatment than among patients without this issue," says researcher John Liljestrand.

## Snoring and Sleep Apnea

70 percent of all snorers can have some level of sleep apnea, so the odds are not in your favor if you are aware of a snoring problem and not addressing it. Obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) can actually stop you from breathing dozens of times a night for at least ten seconds at a time. Your brain and heart do not receive enough oxygen as a result of sleep apnea. This generally leads to increases in blood pressure and heart rate, and can put you at a greater risk for a heart attack. Depending on how severe your sleep apnea is, a CPAP (Continuous Positive Airway Pressure) machine may be the proper line of treatment. However, if you are experiencing mild

or moderate apneas, or are unable to tolerate the CPAP, a dental sleep appliance may be more appropriate to treat your condition. This innovative appliance is considerably more comfortable (with a 90% compliance rate) and much easier to travel with than the bulky CPAP. It is believed that in 5 years, they estimate that 50% of all heart attacks could be attributed to an undiagnosed sleep apnea issue. If you have experienced any of the below symptoms, you may want to discuss being tested for a potential sleep disorder with your physician or a properly trained sleep dentist.

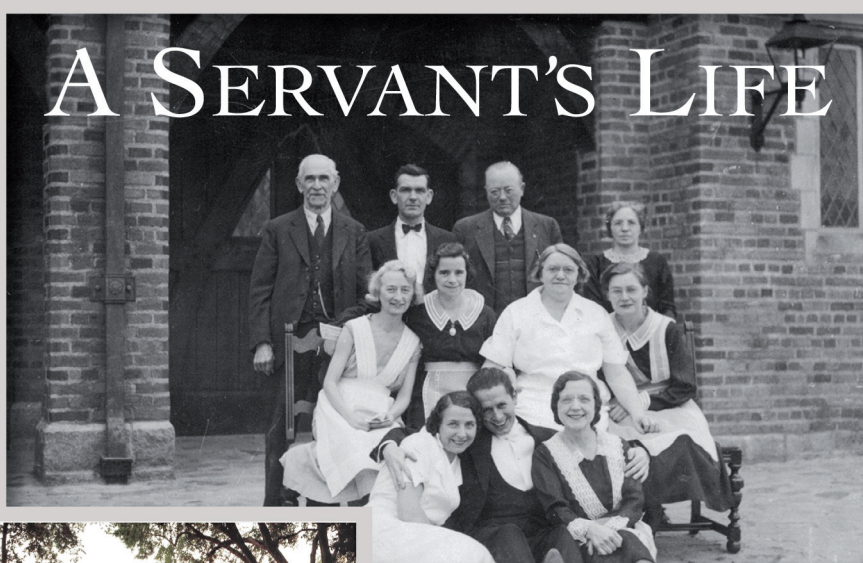
## Symptoms of a Sleep Breathing Disorder

- **Snoring**
- **Daytime Sleepiness**
- **Morning headaches**
- **High Blood Pressure**
- **Obesity**
- **TMJ symptoms**
- **Difficulty waking**
- **GERD or Acid Reflux**

Today, information is increasingly available about the connection between oral infections and many common chronic diseases. Periodontitis, an inflammatory disease affecting the tissues that surround the teeth, causes low-grade inflammation and is regarded as an independent risk factor for coronary artery disease and diabetes. Having the proper dental cleaning to maintain your gums and the surrounding ligaments and bone of your teeth will keep inflammation and bacteria at a healthy level. Regular dental visits, with the necessary radiographs to identify any underlying infections, is even more important with our growing knowledge of the human body. And giving your dentist the proper health history could also help them identify an underlying sleep breathing disorder like sleep apnea. So please make your dental health a priority because it will benefit your entire body and life.

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