

## Just One More Reason To See Your Dentist Regularly

by Oscar Menendez, DDS, MAGD, FACD, FICOI  
Comprehensive Dental Care



A recent study, using data collected during a long-term health study provides additional evidence for a link between increased risk of cancer in individuals with advanced gum disease. The study, published in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*, used the data from comprehensive dental exams performed on 7,466 participants from Maryland, Minnesota, Mississippi, and North Carolina, as part of their participation in the Atherosclerosis Risk in Communities (ARIC) study who were then followed from the late 1990's until 2012. During the follow-up period, 1,648 new cancer cases were diagnosed.

The research team found a 24 percent increase in the risk of developing cancer among participants with severe periodontitis, compared to those with mild to no periodontitis at baseline. Advanced gum disease, also called periodontitis, is caused by bacterial infection that damages the soft tissue and bone that support the teeth. Previous research has shown a link between periodontitis and increased cancer risk,

although the mechanism connecting the two diseases is still uncertain. Among patients who had no teeth – which can be a sign of severe periodontitis – the increase in risk was 28 percent. The highest risk was observed in cases of lung cancer, followed by colorectal cancer.

When the researchers did sub-group analyses, they found that participants with severe periodontal disease had more than double the risk of developing lung cancer, compared to those with no to mild periodontitis. An 80 percent increase in risk of colon cancer was observed for participants who were edentulous at baseline, which is consistent with prior findings. Among non-smokers, a two-fold higher risk was noted for participants with severe periodontitis, compared to those who had no to mild periodontitis.

This is the largest study addressing the association of gum disease and cancer risk using dental examinations to measure gum disease prior to cancer diagnosis. The findings are particularly interesting in light of research, including a recent study in Science,

which determined that colorectal cancer tissues contained bacteria that are present in the mouth, including bacteria that have been associated with periodontal disease.

This demonstrates the importance of good homecare and regular care from your dental professional. Make sure your dental caregivers are monitoring your periodontal health. Healthy gums make for a healthy smile and body! Keep smiling and stay healthy! ♦

**“There is more evidence of a link between severe gum disease and cancer risk.”**

Oscar Menendez, DDS, MAGD, Comprehensive Dental Care is located at 2682 West Lake Road, Palm Harbor, (727) 785-4461, [www.palmharbordentist.com](http://www.palmharbordentist.com).

**Hours of Service:** Monday-Thursday 8-4pm.