



## American Academy of Periodontology

### Millions of Americans May Be at Risk for Serious Health Problems Due to Gum Disease

CHICAGO, July 9, 1998 – A new analysis of recent research has revealed gum disease may represent a far more serious threat to the health of millions of Americans than previously realized. These studies found that periodontal (gum) infection may contribute to the development of heart disease, the nation's number one cause of death, increase the risk of premature, underweight births, and pose a serious threat to people whose health is already compromised due to diabetes and respiratory diseases.

"It seems clear that gum disease, far from being just an oral health problem, actually represents a significant health risk to millions of people," said Robert Genco, D.D.S., Ph.D., editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Periodontology*.

The article, a first in the oral health field, is a comprehensive analysis of research on periodontal disease and its link to systemic conditions. It supports what many scientists have suspected for years -- that oral infections such as periodontal disease can adversely affect conditions outside the mouth. This compilation of current research studies on this link is being published in the *Annals of Periodontology* concurrently with the article in the *Journal of Periodontology*.

"Periodontal disease is characterized by inflammation and bacterial infection of the gums surrounding the teeth. The bacteria that are associated with periodontal disease can travel into the bloodstream to other parts of the body, and that puts health at risk," said Dr. Genco. "People think of gum disease in terms of their teeth, but they don't think about the fact that gum disease is a serious infection that can release bacteria into the bloodstream. The end result could mean additional health risks for people whose health is already affected by other diseases -- or lead to serious complications like heart disease."

"Many Americans have oral exams each year to check for cavities and tooth decay. This research shows it is equally important to pay attention to gums. Having a periodontal screening and evaluation could help protect the overall health of millions," said Timothy Rose, D.D.S., M.S., president of The American Academy of Periodontology. "There are often no symptoms of gum disease in its early stages, so people need to make sure their dentist or periodontist checks their gums regularly."

The above information from the AAP Web site is located at:  
<http://www.perio.org/consumer/mediahg1.html>