



An Ounce of Prevention: Inflammation

Inflammation is a way the body protects itself, but it comes at a cost...

How Does Inflammation Relate to Dental Problems?

Dental disease, cavities, gum disease (gingivitis), and bone disease (periodontal disease/periodontitis) all have an inflammation component. When you have a deep cavity, you may feel sensitivity to sweets, sensitivity to hot and cold, or may feel pain. Those are an indication that the nerve of your tooth is inflamed.

When you have gum disease it shows as gums that are red, swollen, may feel hot, and bleed easily. It may hurt when you brush your teeth and you may see a red tint on your toothbrush (bleeding gums). You may think bleeding gums are normal, but they aren't. What would you think if every time you washed your hands your fingernails bled?

Inflammation associated with bone disease is similar to gum disease, but also involves the destruction of the bone and support of teeth. In periodontal disease, the inflammation process causes chemicals to be released, which causes the bone and ligament that holds teeth in place to fall apart, to dissolve. When this occurs, your teeth and gums may be sensitive, gums red, swollen, and hot, and more of the tooth will become exposed (you've heard the phrase long in tooth?). As the process continues, teeth may become loose and begin to move and ultimately, you may need to have teeth removed.

How Does Inflammation Relate to My Health?

Dental health isn't the only thing affected by inflammation - there are other health perils that can occur. The battle between your body and the invading bacteria cause a release of inflammation chemicals to enter your blood stream. These chemicals circulate throughout your body and can have serious effects. Gum and bone disease have been linked to low birth weight babies, strokes, heart disease, diabetes and its control, rheumatoid arthritis, and dementia.

If you feel or see signs of inflammation, you need to contact your dentist and set up an examination as soon as possible. Your dentist will be able to help determine the cause of your inflammation, identify what type of cleaning would be needed to reduce the amount of inflammation-causing bacteria in your mouth, and come up with a treatment plan to get your dental health back on track.



What is Inflammation?

Your body comes equipped with defense mechanisms, which help notify you and protect you when a problem occurs. Inflammation is the way your body can protect you from outside invaders, such as bacteria and viruses.

When you have inflammation, you'll experience swelling, redness, and the area may feel hot. That's the end result of your body opening your blood vessels to send an army of white blood cells to surround and protect the area.



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