



Oral Health and Kidney Disease

Learn about special considerations for those with kidney disease

The Link Between Oral and Overall Health

Though many of us would not automatically think to link the condition of our mouths to the overall health of our bodies, recent research suggests that the two are more closely related than previously thought. Poor oral hygiene and the inflammation that often accompanies have been linked to major health issues from low birth weight to diabetic complications.

When we don't brush properly or routinely get professional dental cleanings, bacteria continue to replicate and live in our mouths. This build-up of plaque and tartar can cause gum disease, inflammation, or infection.

Our bodies may respond to untreated inflammation by attacking our healthy tissues and organs. Chronic inflammation can also increase the risk of developing serious diseases, like heart disease, diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, and even cancer.

Left untreated, oral infections can become systemic, spreading to other areas of the body, sometimes leading to hospitalization or even death.

Oral Health and Kidney Disease

Recent studies show that those living with kidney disease are more likely to have gum disease or other oral health conditions than those without kidney disease. In addition to this heightened risk, renal patients should consider the following:

- People with kidney disease have weakened immune systems, so are more prone to experiencing infection.
- Calcium imbalance attributed to kidney disease can weaken bones, causing bone loss in the jaw and increasing the risk for teeth to become loose and/or fall out.
- Patients should communicate with their dentist if they are undergoing dialysis or taking medications for kidney disease. Some dialysis treatments include the use of blood thinners, which can cause bleeding issues during dental treatment. As a general rule, it is not recommended to schedule dental appointments on dialysis days.
- Patients should also communicate with their kidney doctor when dental treatment is planned, as the doctor may want to prescribe a pre-procedure antibiotic to reduce the risk of the patient developing an infection.



Oral Health and Transplants

To prepare for kidney transplant, patients must complete an oral exam. Oral infections from severe tooth decay or gum disease could disqualify the patient from receiving a transplant, or at least delay the procedure until the dental work to address the infection is completed.

Prevention is Key!

- Brush for at least two minutes, twice a day, with a soft-bristled toothbrush.
- Floss at least once a day.
- Visit the dentist for exams and cleanings at least twice per year.



For more oral health information, please visit our website at www.bcbsfedental.com.



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