

A healthier smile, a healthier you?

The Mouth MattersSM

Brushing your
teeth may be more
important than
you think.

We want you to know[®]



Look beyond the smile

A nice smile can brighten your appearance. But good dental health is important for other reasons.

Good dental health helps keep your mouth in better shape. That means fewer cavities, stronger teeth and less chance for periodontal — or gum — disease.

Importantly, good oral health is part of overall health and well-being. In fact, your mouth can be a window into many general health problems. At Aetna[‡], we believe that visiting your dentist for preventive care is a great place to start.

It's true — the mouth matters

Trusted groups, like the Columbia University College of Dental Medicine, have conducted clinical studies to understand the connection between infections in the mouth and their impact on other parts of the body. They have shown that taking care of your teeth and gums may be important to your overall health.

Many diseases and conditions are visible through the mouth. In fact, sometimes the first sign of a general health problem shows up in the mouth.¹ And a dental professional can spot signs of many of them.

As infections in the mouth may affect other parts of the body, this means good oral health has never been more important — or the potential advantages more clear!

Watch your mouth — common dental conditions

Gum disease

Many adults have some form of gum disease. If left untreated, gingivitis, an early form, can become a serious infection, destroying the gums and tissues surrounding the teeth.

Gum disease usually begins when bacteria that aren't properly removed during brushing and flossing inflame the gums.

Serious gum disease may not stop in the mouth. Bacteria may enter the bloodstream. There, they may complicate diseases in other parts of the body.

Research over the last five years suggests that serious gum disease, known as periodontitis, may be associated with many health problems. This is especially true if serious gum disease continues without treatment.^{2,3}

Now, here's the good news. Researchers are discovering that a healthy mouth may be important to your overall health.^{2,3}

What an oral exam can help spot

- Infections
- Immune disorders
- Injuries
- Nutrition needs
- Some cancers

What your dentist looks for:

- Anything unusual in the mouth tissues
- Gum diseases
- Cavities, restorations like crowns or bridges, and other tooth conditions

¹MayoClinic.com. "Oral health: A window to your overall health." Available online at <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/dental/DE00001>. Accessed November 2007.

²Demmer RT and Desvarieux M. "Periodontal infections and cardiovascular disease." *Journal of the American Dental Association*. October 2006;137:145-205.

³Mealey, BL. "Periodontal disease and diabetes: A two-way street." *Journal of the American Dental Association*. October 2006.

[‡]Dental benefits and dental insurance plans are offered, underwritten or administered by: Aetna Life Insurance Company, Aetna Dental Inc., Aetna Dental of California Inc. and/or Aetna Health Inc. Health benefits and health insurance plans are offered, underwritten or administered by: Aetna Health Inc., Aetna Health of California Inc., Aetna Health of the Carolinas Inc., Aetna Health of Illinois Inc. and/or Aetna Life Insurance Company (Aetna).



Pregnancy

Pregnancy causes changes to the body. Sometimes it can cause changes in the mouth. This may affect your health and the health of your unborn baby.

Knowing what might happen is helpful.

- **Serious gum disease.** Serious gum disease, periodontitis, may produce a chemical in the body that may cause early labor. By visiting the dentist while pregnant, you can check on gum health. If you have a problem, treatment can begin right away.
- **Pregnancy gingivitis.** This condition is caused by pregnancy hormones. These hormones can make the gums red or swollen, even bleed. Your dentist can give you a home-care program to help control this condition.
- **Morning sickness.** If you get sick often, stomach acids can wear down tooth enamel. Your dentist can provide a fluoride mouth rinse to help fight the effects. Morning sickness also may cause appetite loss. This may lead to poor nutrition. A prescription vitamin or supplement can help.

Diabetes

Diabetics are more likely to develop mouth and gum conditions than non-diabetics.⁴ For some, bad breath or bleeding gums may be the first signs of diabetes.

Diabetics also may develop:

- Dry mouth, which may increase tooth decay
- Receding gums, especially if their diabetes is poorly managed

Treating the gums can help make diabetes easier to control.

Heart health

Heart disease is the number-one cause of death for Americans. There are several theories as to how periodontitis may have an impact on heart health. One theory is that bacteria may enter the blood stream through the mouth and have the potential to attach to fatty deposits in the blood vessels, which may contribute to heart disease.² Another theory is that the inflammation associated with periodontitis may play a role.²

On a positive note, treatment may help. One study, published in the 2007 *New England Journal of Medicine*, found that treating severe gum disease can improve the function of the blood vessels.⁵ In turn, this may help heart health.

Oral cancer

Regular dental check-ups also help detect signs of oral cancer early on. If a warning sign is found, a more complete examination is needed.

Your dentist may suggest a monthly self-exam. Find out how to do one properly during your next visit.

For more information, check: www.cancer.gov; www.adha.org/oralhealth; or www.cdc.gov/OralHealth/factsheets/oc-facts.htm.

Other conditions and diseases

We are always learning about new associations between oral health and overall health.

We'll continue to evaluate new studies and what they mean for you. You'll get information that can help you make better decisions about dental care and your overall health.

⁴Academy of General Dentistry. "Links between oral health and overall health." Available online at <http://www.agd.org>. Accessed April 2007.

⁵Tonetti MS, D'Aiuto F, Nibali L, et al. "Treatment of Periodontitis and Endothelial Function." *The New England Journal of Medicine*. March 1, 2007; 356:911.

Making the mouth-body connection

When it comes to mouth matters, Aetna looks at the whole picture. For members with both an Aetna medical and dental health benefits or health insurance plan, we have your medical and dental information. We put this information together — then put it to work.

This lets us identify members who may have reason to be concerned about dental health and its effects. Our focus is on those who are pregnant or who have heart disease or diabetes.

We reach out to these members with information, resources and support. Our goal? Encourage them to:

- Learn about dental health and its potential impact on the body
- Visit a dental professional regularly
- Take steps to avoid problems down the road
- Reach their optimal health

Not all toothpastes are the same

Aetna has formed an association with Colgate to bring you more. Colgate Total® has a patented formula that reduces and helps prevent the gum disease gingivitis. It fights germs for 12 hours, and is the only toothpaste both approved by the FDA and accepted by the American Dental Association to help prevent gingivitis.

Colgate Total fights a range of problems in addition to gingivitis — to give you complete protection for 12 hours. It also fights stains, plaque, cavities, tartar, weak enamel, tender gums and bad breath, and whitens teeth.

Colgate Total is approved for the prevention of gingivitis. Not approved for the prevention or treatment of serious gum disease or other diseases. Ask your dental or medical professional about the emerging research on the mouth-body association.

Dental information programs provide general dental information and are not a substitute for diagnosis or treatment by a dentist or other dental care professional. Dental providers are independent contractors and are not agents of Aetna. Provider participation may change without notice. Aetna does not provide care or guarantee access to dental services. Not all dental services are covered. See plan documents for a complete description of benefits, exclusions, limitations and conditions of coverage. Plan features and availability may vary by location and/or group size and are subject to change. Discount programs provide access to discounted prices and are not insured benefits. For self-funded accounts, benefits coverage is offered by your employer, with administrative services only provided by Aetna Life Insurance Company. Information subject to change. For more information about Aetna plans, refer to www.aetna.com.

Policy forms issued in Oklahoma include: GR-9, GR-9N, GR-23 and/or GR-29/GR-29N.

Top tips for a healthier mouth

- Brush twice a day with a toothpaste that contains fluoride and an antibacterial ingredient, and carries the American Dental Association Seal of Acceptance, like Colgate Total
- Floss after brushing
- Stop smoking
- Eat nutritiously and exercise

Learn more on the Web

Go to www.aetna.com. You'll get tools and information, 24/7. They can help you make smarter choices about dental care for you and your family.

- Simple Steps to Better Dental Health® — a dental information resource that includes a tool to find out if children are at risk for cavities
- Aetna Navigator® — your secure member website
- DocFind® — an online directory for finding a dentist or specialist

Your good oral health and overall health can start today

The benefits of oral health are clear, so be sure to visit your dental professional regularly. Make an appointment now if you don't have one scheduled. Call Member Services at the number on your ID card.

MANUFACTURER'S COUPON EXPIRES 12/31/10

SAVE

\$150



On any Colgate Total® Toothpaste
(4.0 oz. or larger)

CONSUMER: Do not send this coupon to Colgate-Palmolive Company. Limit one coupon per purchase of product/s indicated. You must pay any sales tax.
RETAILER: Colgate-Palmolive Company will reimburse the face value plus 8¢ handling if submitted in accordance with our Redemption Policy. For policy and/or coupon redemption send to: Colgate-Palmolive Company, P.O. Box 880249, El Paso, TX 88588-0249. Cash Value 1/100¢. Coupon may not be bought, reproduced, transferred or sold. Void where prohibited or if transferred to any person, firm or group prior to store redemption. Valid only in the USA, its territories, and possessions. Redeemable at Food, Drug, Discount and other Stores accepting coupons.

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