


# The Firehall Dentist

4 Barton Street, Box 460 Waterdown, Ontario L0R 2H0 Tel: (905) 689-9111 Fax: (905) 689-9328

## PERIODONTAL DISEASE AND HEART DISEASE

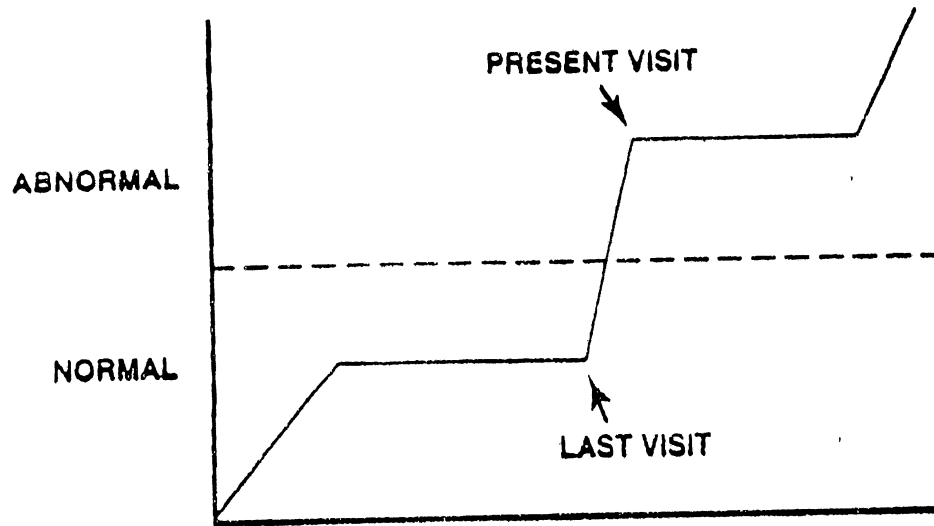


**Infective endocarditis** is a condition characterized by inflammation of the interior lining of the heart and the heart valves, generally caused by bacterial infection. Heart valves that have been damaged or are abnormal are at the highest risk for infective endocarditis, but infection can also occur in normal valves when a large number of bacteria are present. Researchers believe that when an individual is diagnosed with periodontal disease, **a normal task such as chewing or brushing can injure gum tissue, allowing bacteria to enter the bloodstream. The accumulation of these bacteria on heart valves often leads to a fatal infection unless treated.**

**Coronary artery disease** is another type of cardiovascular disease in which the walls of the coronary arteries (heart blood vessels) gradually thicken due to the build-up of fatty proteins. Often blood clots form in these narrowed coronary arteries and normal blood flow activity is obstructed, depleting the heart of the nutrients and oxygen needed to function properly. Scientists now believe that bacteria found in the oral cavity enter the bloodstream, attach to fatty plaques and may contribute to clot formation. Researchers have found that people suffering from periodontal disease are twice as likely to suffer from coronary artery disease than those without periodontal disease. Current data leads scientists to believe that periodontal disease is an important risk factor for heart disease, working in concert with other risk factors such as age, smoking, diabetes, hypertension and elevated blood cholesterol

Additionally, a recent study that looked at the casual relationship of oral infection as a risk factor for stroke, people diagnosed with acute cerebrovascular ischemia were found more likely too have an oral infection when compared to those in a control group.

The American Heart Association estimated approximately 58 million Americans, 1 in 5, suffer from cardiovascular disease, making it the number one cause of death in the United States.



**FIGURE 1**  
Diagram illustrating episodic nature of periodontal disease

## **IMPORTANT PATIENT INFORMATION**

### **Relationship of periodontal Disease to Systemic Disease**

- People suffering from periodontal disease are twice as likely to suffer from coronary artery disease than those without periodontal disease.
- Periodontal disease predisposes or exacerbates diabetes.
- Periodontal disease predisposes patients to lung infections.
- Pregnant women with periodontal disease are more prone to have pre-term, low birth weight (PLBW) infants.