

Oral-Systemic Health, Medications

You may have heard reports associating oral diseases with other diseases. These reports typically talk about an advanced form of gum disease (periodontitis) and diabetes, heart disease or stroke.

What do these reports mean?

Studies suggest that periodontitis is associated with the conditions listed above, but that does not mean that one causes the other. Associated means that people who have certain diseases—like diabetes or heart disease—also may have periodontitis.

One may cause the other, but it is also possible that these associations are caused by a third factor. For example, people who smoke are at increased risk for periodontitis and a number of other conditions, including heart disease. So, it is possible that a person could have both periodontitis and heart disease because he or she smokes.

These associations are very interesting, but we want to know more. Does one disease cause the other? Does one disease make the other worse? Does treating one disease prevent you from getting the other disease? Now that these associations have been identified, further research can define if a relationship exists and if so, how the conditions are related.