

# The Connections Between Oral and Systemic Health



The mouth is the gateway to the body, and directly connected to one’s overall systemic health. During routine visits, there are questions you can ask patients and signs you can look for to help manage other potential health issues and chronic conditions.<sup>1, 2, 3, 4, 6</sup>



## Mental Health

### Build rapport and become a trusted advisor to your patients.

Note any changes in your patient’s demeanor, moods, behaviors, and periodontal status that lead you to suspect mental health issues. Studies show that people with periodontal disease have a 37% increased risk of developing serious mental illness, anxiety, and depression. Moreover, patients with severe mental illness are almost 50 times more likely to have periodontal disease.<sup>5, 13</sup>



## The Heart

**Inquire about your patient’s cardiovascular health.** You may wish to obtain a blood pressure reading on all patients at every dental visit. This simple task can identify patients who are at risk or if they are potentially at risk for heart disease or stroke. Studies have shown that bacteria that infect the gingiva and cause periodontitis could also travel to blood vessels elsewhere in the body where they could cause blood vessel inflammation and damage.<sup>1, 4, 11, 14</sup>



## Immunodeficiencies

**Ask your patients if they have recently experienced any of the following symptoms:** unusual rashes, fever, headache, enlarged lymph nodes/ lesions, or malaise, as these symptoms can be a sign of potential systemic issues or conditions, such as immune deficiencies. Associated gingival and periodontal changes may also be noted in these patients.<sup>1</sup>



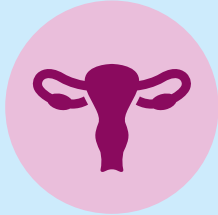
## The Lungs

**Evaluate your patient’s breathing pattern.** If a patient’s breathing is laboring or if a patient is experiencing difficulty breathing, consider a referral for a Spirometry test to screen for lung diseases that could be impacted by poor oral health care.<sup>1, 3, 10</sup>



## Bone Health

**Performing routine dental radiographs** can help detect signs of osteoporosis/osteopenia. Adjustments in dental treatment and referral to the patient’s Primary Care Physician may be needed if changes in the bone are suspected.<sup>1, 12</sup>



## Maternal Health

**Educate expecting patients** on the importance of maintaining oral care while pregnant. Screen for dental conditions, such as caries and gingivitis, as studies show 60-75% of pregnant women experience pregnancy gingivitis, or periodontitis which can lead to an increased risk of preterm birth or low birth weight babies, among other health conditions.<sup>7, 8, 9</sup>

As a dental professional, you play a significant role in supporting your patient’s health. You may want to ask probing questions regarding their oral and overall health and wellness. When you enter the room, ask them to rate their overall health on a scale of 1-10, determine if they are feeling any pain. It’s important patients understand that you’re not just asking about how their mouth feels, you’re asking how their body feels.

Visit **Philips Dental Professional website** for additional patient education resources and information on Philips products to improve your patients’ oral health and systemic health.

*This is not intended to provide medical advice. Please consult a physician for medical advice.*



Sources:  
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<sup>2</sup> Grenco, R. J., Graziani, F., & Hatzur, H. (2020, June). *Effects of periodontal disease on glycemic control, complications, and incidence of diabetes mellitus* (Volume 83 Issue 1, pages 59-65). *Periodontology* 2000. <https://doi.org/10.1111/prd.12271>  
<sup>3</sup> Sapey, E. (2020, June). *The Clinical and Inflammatory Relationships between Periodontitis and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease*. *Journal of Clinical Periodontology*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpe.13324>  
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<sup>7</sup> López, N. J., Smith, P. C., & Gutierrez, J. (2002). *Higher Risk of Preterm Birth and Low Birth Weight in Women with Periodontal Disease*. *Journal of Dental Research*, 81(1), 58–63. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002203450208100113>  
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<sup>9</sup> American Dental Association Council on Access, Prevention, and Interprofessional Relations, 2006.  
<sup>10</sup> Lamb, K., Theodore, D., Bhutta, B.S. (2021). *Spirometry*. StatPearls Publishing, Treasure Island (FL). PMID: 32809361.  
<sup>11</sup> High Blood Pressure. <https://www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure/index.html>  
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