

Improve your total body health... starting with your mouth

Many people do not realize overall health begins in your mouth. When the subject of health and fitness is discussed the issue of oral health is sometimes overlooked.

In the past few years, the serious -- even fatal -- consequence of deferred dental care in young people has received growing attention in the United States.

A case where a boy died as the result of an untreated abscessed tooth brought this problem to light on a well-known news show.

This story inspired people, including a Kansas City dentist, to reach out to members of the dental community to find a way to make a difference right here in their communities.

Last July, I met Dr. Bill Busch, a co-founder of TeamSmile, at a TeamSmile event at Kauffman Stadium. TeamSmile, based out of Kansas City, was created with the mission of facilitating partnerships between dental professionals, pro sports teams and dental organizations.

The goal of these partnerships is to provide life-changing dental care and instruction to children who otherwise would not have access to it.

For several seasons, the Kansas City Royals have partnered with TeamSmile to host a free dental health education screening and treatment clinic at Kauffman Stadium for children associated with the Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Kansas City. Kids receive free dental care in between taking in all of the attractions of the Outfield Experience.

Brian McRae, another former Kansas City Royal, and I represented the Royals at the TeamSmile event, signed autographs and

talked to the kids. See TeamSmile at www.teamsmile.org.

Clinical research suggests strong links between periodontal disease and chronic, systemic inflammation throughout your body. Without proper oral hygiene, bacteria can reach levels that might lead to oral infections, such as tooth decay and gum disease, and also heart disease.

Several bacteria species causing periodontitis have been found in the atherosclerotic plaque in arteries in the heart and elsewhere. This plaque can lead to a heart attack.

Oral bacteria could also harm blood vessels or cause blood clots by releasing toxins resembling proteins found in artery walls or the bloodstream. The immune system's response to these toxins could harm vessel walls or make blood clots more easily.

It is also possible mouth inflammation revs up inflammation throughout the body, including the arteries, where it can lead to heart attack and stroke. Along with brushing properly, regular flossing and diet, scheduling dental appointments for

checkups and cleanings should be considered.

A proper diet can provide many of the essential nutrients needed for healthy gums and optimum dental health. Since most of us do not eat properly, using the right supplements to insure maximum dental health should be a priority.

There are many nutrients that have a positive effect on oral health. Everything from receding gums and tooth sensitivity can often be attributed to a vitamin C deficiency.

It is estimated gums turn over at least 20 percent of their collagen every single day. Collagen supports the gums by promoting both circulation and strength. Vitamin C inhibits the formation of plaque and tartar. In fact, vitamin C is referred to as the "invisible toothbrush."

Studies have also shown calcium and vitamin D decrease bone loss and supplementation may also improve tooth retention.



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