



STRESS AND PERIODONTAL HEALTH

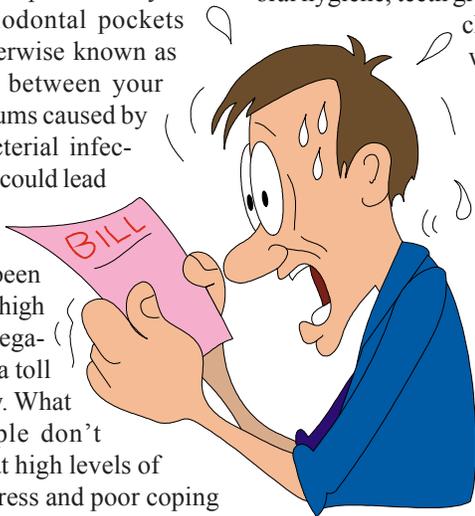
Financial Stress: Your Pockets may be Deeper than You Think

Gift giving, job losses and a flailing economy are financial stressors that could make your pockets deeper than you think. Periodontal pockets that is, otherwise known as the spaces between your teeth and gums caused by an oral bacterial infection, which could lead to periodontitis.

It's long been known that high stress can negatively take a toll on the body. What many people don't know is that high levels of financial stress and poor coping abilities increase twofold the likelihood of developing periodontitis. As you read this, relax, steady your breathing and put financial worries aside – your teeth and gums will appreciate it.

Financial strain can be a long-term constant pressure. Research reported in the *Journal of Periodontology* stated that an

ever-present financial stress and lack of adequate coping skills could lead to altered habits, such as reducing oral hygiene, teeth grinding, salivary



changes and the weakening of the body's ability to fight infections. Periodontitis is a bacterial infection that when left untreated with time, may cause teeth to become loose and eventually fall out.

The study showed that people who dealt with their financial strain in an active and practical way (problem-focused) rather than with avoidance techniques (emotion-focused) had no more risk of severe periodontal disease than those without money problems.

Many of the risk factors for peri-

odontal diseases, such as poor oral hygiene and infrequent professional care, can be controlled with minimal personal time and financial resources.

Eliminating periodontal diseases may also eliminate a risk factor for heart disease, respiratory disease, diabetes complications and preterm low-birthweight so it is especially important to do what you can to protect your oral health.

Periodontists recommend the basics for taking care of your oral health:

- Replace toothbrushes every few months when the bristles begin to look frayed.
- Floss daily to break up the bacterial colonies between teeth that can cause periodontal diseases.
- Brush your teeth at least twice a day.
- Seek dental care for professional cleanings, as well as screenings for periodontal diseases.

For more information, please visit the American Academy of Periodontology Web site at www.perio.org. \$

Minutes a Day will Help to Prevent Periodontal Diseases

Lifestyles are becoming faster-paced with each passing day. Just when you think you've finally caught up, your boss gives you a new project; your car needs a new engine; your child spills juice all over your newly cleaned floor or your dog gets loose.

During these busy times, it's important to take a few minutes twice a day to do something beneficial for yourself—brush and floss. Good oral hygiene doesn't just protect your health, it also saves you money. By preventing dental problems, you can keep dental care costs to a minimum. Following are some common mistakes people make when taking care of their oral health.

- Not making time to floss daily. Plaque accumulates daily, so

flossing should be part of your at-home daily oral hygiene routine.

- Flossing only when you see food stuck between your teeth. Floss helps remove popcorn kernels, broccoli and other foods from your teeth. It also helps remove the invisible film of bacteria called plaque that is constantly forming between teeth.
- Not flossing correctly. It's important to floss slowly and correctly. Gently guide the floss between the teeth, and do not snap or force it in place. Curve the floss into a "C" shape against one tooth and gently guide it along that tooth and just barely under the gum line. Move the floss up and down on each side of every tooth.
- Using a toothbrush with hard

bristles. It's important to begin with the right equipment. Choose a soft bristled toothbrush that reaches every surface of each tooth.

- Brushing teeth aggressively. Brushing should be done in a gentle circular motion. Brushing teeth too hard can cause the gums to recede and expose the tooth roots. To brush correctly, begin by positioning the brush at a 45-degree angle where your gums meet. Gently move the brush in a circular motion several times using short, gentle strokes. To clean the inside surfaces of the upper and lower front teeth, hold the brush vertically. Make several gentle back and forth strokes over each tooth and its surrounding gum tissue. Clean the biting surfaces by using short gentle strokes. \$

The American Academy of Periodontology Patient Page is a public service of the AAP and should not be used as a substitute for the care and advice of your personal periodontist. There may be variations in treatment that your periodontist will recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

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