

# The Link Between Oral Health and Overall Health

Washington Dental Service, a member of the nationwide Delta Dental Plans Association, is the leading dental benefits company in the state of Washington. And since dental coverage is our only business, no other company matches our commitment to improving oral health.

What you may or may not realize is that the health of your teeth and gums is important not only for your oral health, but it can also have a significant impact on your overall health. Research has shown that the mouth is a window to the health of the body. This is why maintaining good oral health is one of the smartest things you can do for your body.

## Mouth

Many diseases or conditions that affect the whole body show up in the mouth, which is a portal of entry for microbial infections. In addition, some medications, chemotherapy and other therapies have oral side effects, such as dry mouth, that can compromise oral and overall health.

## Heart

Periodontal (gum) disease may increase the risk of cardiovascular disease and fatal heart attacks. In fact, those with gum disease are almost twice as likely to suffer from heart disease as those with healthy gums.

## Brain

Periodontal disease may increase the risk of stroke. Research has shown that harmful bacteria in the mouth can make a person more susceptible to developing blood clots and can eventually increase the chance of a stroke.

## Pancreas (Diabetes)

Diabetics are at greater risk for periodontal disease — called the “sixth complication of diabetes.” Diabetes affects the whole body, including the mouth. Periodontal disease may disrupt the control of blood sugars, which can increase the likelihood of serious complications, such as heart and lung diseases.

## Reproductive Tract

Women with advanced gum disease may be more likely to give birth to premature or low birth-weight babies.

