

Heart Health and Oral Health Link (ABC News)

The next time your dentist probes into your mouth he may be getting a sneak peak as to what's happening to your heart. Continuing research at Columbia University suggests more trips to the dentist may be just what the cardiologist ordered.

"What we do not know is the nature of the association. We do not know if the nature of the association is casual, or not, or whether it's due to chance alone," Dr. Moise Desvarieux, of Columbia University, said.

For over a decade, scientists have been studying the relationship between a build up of plaque on the gums and a build up of plaque in the arteries. Experts want to know if bacteria from gum disease travels from the mouth to other organs or if the body overreacts to the bacteria by creating inflammation in the blood vessels.

"We're very careful to be sure of what we're seeing, that it's not simply a manifestation of two diseases that have common risk to factors," Desvarieux said.