

Tooth brushing Less Than Twice a Day Linked to Increased CV Risk

Individuals who do not brush their teeth twice a day have an increased risk of heart disease, a new study shows [1].

The study was published online May 27, 2010 in *BMJ*. The researchers note that while it has been established that inflammation in the body (including mouth and gums) plays an important role in the buildup of atherosclerosis, this is the first study to investigate whether the number of times individuals brush their teeth has any bearing on the risk of developing heart disease.

They analyzed data from more than 11 000 adults who took part in the **Scottish Health Survey**, in which individuals were asked about lifestyle behaviors such as smoking, physical activity, and oral health routines. Questions asked included how often they visited the dentist and how often they brushed their teeth (twice a day, once a day, or less than once a day). Information was also collated on medical history and family history of heart disease and blood pressure. Blood samples were taken from a subgroup of participants and tested for C-reactive protein (CRP) and fibrinogen levels. The data gathered from the interviews were linked to hospital admissions and deaths.

Results showed generally good oral hygiene practices, with 62% of participants saying they visited the dentist every six months and 71% reporting that they brushed their teeth twice a day. After adjustment for established risk factors, it was found that participants who reported less frequent toothbrushing had an increased risk of heart disease compared with people who brushed their teeth twice a day. Participants who had poor oral hygiene also had increased levels of CRP and fibrinogen.

Reference

1. de Oliveira C, Watt R, and Hamer M. Toothbrushing, inflammation, and risk of cardiovascular disease: Results from Scottish Health Survey. *BMJ* 2010; DOI:10.1136/bmj.c2451. Available at: <http://www.bmj.com>.