

Professional Dental Cleanings May Reduce Risk of Heart Attack, Stroke

ScienceDaily (Nov. 30, 2011) — Professional tooth scaling was associated with fewer heart attacks and strokes in a study from Taiwan presented at the American Heart Association's Scientific Sessions 2011.

Among more than 100,000 people, those who had their teeth scraped and cleaned (tooth scaling) by a dentist or dental hygienist had a 24 percent lower risk of heart attack and 13 percent lower risk of stroke compared to those who had never had a dental cleaning. The participants were followed for an average of seven years.

Scientists considered tooth scaling frequent if it occurred at least twice or more in two years; occasional tooth scaling was once or less in two years.

The study included more than 51,000 adults who had received at least one full or partial tooth scaling and a similar number of people matched with gender and health conditions who had no tooth scaling. None of the participants had a history of heart attack or stroke at the beginning of the study.

The study didn't adjust for heart attack and stroke risk factors -- such as weight, smoking and race -- that weren't included in the Taiwan National Health insurance data base, the source of the information used in the analysis.

"Protection from heart disease and stroke was more pronounced in participants who got tooth scaling at least once a year," said Emily (Zu-Yin) Chen, M.D., cardiology fellow at the Veterans General Hospital in Taipei, Taiwan.

Professional tooth scaling appears to reduce inflammation-causing bacterial growth that can lead to heart disease or stroke, she said.

Hsin-Bang Leu M.D., is the study co-author. Author disclosures and funding are on the abstract.

Type of periodontal disease predicts degree of risk for heart attack, stroke, and heart failure

In a separate study, researchers found that the value of markers for gum disease predict heart attack, congestive heart failure and stroke in different ways and to different degrees.

Anders Holmlund, D.D.S., Ph.D. Centre for Research and Development of the County Council of Gävleborg, Sweden, and senior consultant; Specialized Dentistry, studied 7,999 participants with periodontal disease and found people with:

- Fewer than 21 teeth had a 69 percent increased risk of heart attack compared to those with the most

teeth.

- A higher number of deepened periodontal pockets (infection of the gum around the base of the tooth) had a 53 percent increased risk of heart attack compared to those with the fewest pockets.
- The least amount of teeth had a 2.5 increased risk of congestive heart failure compared to those with the most teeth.
- The highest incidence of gum bleeding had a 2.1 increased risk of stroke compared to those with the lowest incidence.

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