

# Brush your way to heart health

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Poor oral health has been debated as a possible cause of heart disease for many years. Some research suggests that heart disease, clogged arteries and stroke might be linked to the inflammation and infections caused by oral bacteria.

Dr. Thomas Salinas, a Mayo Clinic dental specialist, says while there appears to be some connection between [oral health](#) and heart disease, it's not well-understood.

"There have been a sporadic number of studies. Some of these are well-controlled with regard to specifically just one disease process. However, as we know, disease presents itself in many ways," explains Dr. Salinas.

While taking good care of your teeth and gums isn't a proven way to prevent heart disease, Dr. Salinas says removing oral bacteria through regular brushing, flossing and dental checkups is an investment in your overall health.

"The big picture here is the oral cavity is the gateway to the body," Dr. Salinas says. "After a period of time without being removed, other species will grow in an anaerobic, or without oxygen environment, and those are the ones that can contribute to systematic disease. It's really important to get that type of bacteria off the teeth."

If you are concerned about [heart disease](#) prevention, ask your [health care provider](#) about proven ways to reduce your risk, such as stopping smoking and maintaining a healthy weight.

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