

# Message to Postmenopausal Women: Increase Yearly Dental Checkups

## *Bisphosphonate Therapies for Osteoporosis Linked to Plaque Buildup*

Postmenopausal women have a new health message to hear: 2 annual dental checkups aren't enough. Older women need more, according to research findings from the Case Western Reserve University School of Dental Medicine and the Cleveland Clinic that come from a study of women both on and off bone-strengthening bisphosphonate therapies for osteoporosis.

Leena Palomo, DDS, assistant professor of periodontics at the dental school, and Maria Clarinda Beunocamino Francisco, MD, from the Center for Specialized Women's Health at the clinic, set out to study the long-term effects of bisphosphonate therapies on the jawbone but came up with these new findings, which impact all women after undergoing menopause.

Their findings were announced in the article "Is Long-Term Bisphosphonate Therapy Associated With Benefits to the Periodontium in Postmenopausal Women?" that was published in the February issue of *Menopause*.

Twenty-eight postmenopausal women with normal bones were compared with 28 women on bisphosphonate therapies for at least 2 years or more. The participants (all between the ages of 51 and 80) received CBCT scans of their jaws and a complete periodontal checkup for dental plaque, bleeding, and loss of bone attachment and of the alveolar bone socket. Both groups followed the recommended ADA oral health stan-

dards to brush twice daily, floss, and have at least 2 dental checkups a year.

The findings for bone strength and other markers for osteoporosis were similar for both groups, but the researchers found both groups had increased dental plaque levels, which could endanger the jawbone of normal postmenopausal women and reverse any benefits gained in bone mass.

*Four checkups a year are recommended to control dental plaque with deep periodontal cleanings.*

While women from both groups had similar bone health results and women on the long-term oral bone-strengthening therapies showed no signs of bone death, they also had abnormal dental plaque.

Dr. Palomo said postmenopausal women may need to see the dentist as many as 4 times a year to control dental plaque with deep periodontal cleanings.

"Women also have to realize that bone disease and gum disease are 2 separate diseases," Dr. Palomo said.

Bisphosphonate therapy isn't enough to keep jawbones healthy, Dr. Palomo added, which means getting rid of dental plaque also.