

PEOPLE WITH PERIODONTAL DISEASE HAVE HIGHER CANCER RISK

People who have periodontal disease have a higher overall risk of developing cancer, say researchers in the June issue of *The Lancet Oncology*.

Studies have suggested that tooth loss and periodontal disease might increase patients' risk of developing cancer, but smoking might have confounded the association.

To determine whether periodontal disease or tooth loss is associated with cancer, Dominique S. Michaud, ScD, Imperial College London, and colleagues from Harvard University, Boston, and University of Puerto Rico, San Juan, used data from the Health Professionals Follow-Up Study (HPFS). HPFS began in 1986 when male health professionals in the United States aged 40 through 75 years responded to baseline questionnaires posted by Harvard University School of Public Health. Follow-up questionnaires were sent to all living participants every two years, and dietary questionnaires were sent every four years.

Participants reported baseline periodontal disease with bone loss, number of natural teeth and tooth loss in previous two years, as well as smoking history and food intake. They also reported any new cancer diagnosis on the follow-up questionnaires. The endpoints researchers measured were overall cancer risk and individual cancers with more than 100 cases reported.

A total of 48,375 men with a median follow-up of 17.7 years were eligible for the study. Researchers recorded 5,720 cases of cancer (excluding non-melanoma skin cancer and non-aggressive prostate cancer) among the participants. The five most common cancers were colorectal (1,043), melanoma of the skin (698), lung (678), bladder (543) and advanced prostate (541).

After adjusting for known risk factors, including smoking history and dietary factors, they found that participants with a history of periodontal disease had a 14 percent higher risk of developing cancer than did participants with no history of periodontal disease. Researchers noted significant associations between periodontal disease and lung, kidney, pancreas and hematologic cancers. They also noted that having fewer teeth at baseline was associated with an increased risk of developing lung cancer.

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