

Tooth loss increases the risk of cardiovascular diseases

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A clear link between periodontitis, calcification of the carotid artery and heart disease has been identified by Malmö University researchers.

Consequently, researchers are stressing the importance for dental and [health care services](#) to work more closely together.

The research, conducted by doctoral student Viveca Wallin Bengtsson, forms part of the Swedish National Study on Aging and Care (SNAC). The purpose of the study is to identify the need for care in the older population over time.

The main objective of the thesis was to study the relationship between periodontitis, cardiovascular diseases and death.

"It is clear that people with periodontitis are more likely to develop cardiovascular diseases and also have an [increased risk](#) of dying," says Wallin Bengtsson.

Whilst working as a dental specialist, Wallin Bengtsson has studied the relationship between atherosclerosis and periodontitis and whether calcifications seen on X-rays over a period of 13 years are associated with the onset of stroke

and/or cardiovascular diseases.

Another objective was to investigate whether individuals with periodontitis were at greater risk of having an event of ischemic stroke or death during a follow-up period of 17 years. For this purpose, people aged 60 and over and living in the Karlskrona area, the only location where SNAC monitored dental services, were included in the study.

Using panoramic dental X-rays, Wallin Bengtsson examined the presence of calcifications and the bone level around the teeth. "Being able to conduct such long-term follow-up studies is rather unique," she explains.

Her study shows: older people with periodontitis are at increased risk of dying compared to people without periodontitis; those with the [disease](#) are more likely to have calcification of the carotid artery; calcification of the carotid artery is linked to cardiovascular diseases; people with periodontitis are at increased risk for ischemic heart diseases over time

Wallin Bengtsson cannot emphasize enough the importance of dentists carefully analyzing any panoramic X-rays taken. The inflammation that occurs in connection with periodontitis can lead to fat deposits and plaque in other arteries of the body.

"The mouth is a vital part of our body. Dental and health care services must therefore work more closely together. When [calcification](#) is detected by X-ray, the patient must be informed and referred to the health care services for further investigation. Furthermore, a closer collaboration would lead to improved preventive dental care."

Provided by Malmö University

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