

Obesity linked to risk of Periodontitis

Obesity is on the rise and becoming a significant worldwide health problem. According to the CDC, 34 percent of U.S. adults older than the age of 20 were obese in 2006. Obesity is associated with serious life-threatening diseases including cardiovascular disease, cancer, and diabetes. Several recent publications show that obesity is also linked to an increased risk for periodontal disease.

Researchers at the Forsyth Institute in Boston evaluate 745 subjects enrolled in 15 different studies within the Department of Periodontology at the Forsyth Institute. They wanted to determine whether being overweight or obese was associated with a greater risk for periodontal disease. They also compared the bacterial makeup of subgingival biofilm between obese and healthy weight subjects.

Two-thirds of those categorized as healthy/gingivitis subjects had a normal BMI (Body Mass Index). In contrast, only one-third of subjects with periodontitis had a normal BMI. Subjects considered overweight or obese were three to five times more likely to have periodontal disease. More periodontal disease was observed in obese subjects under 45 years of age compared to non-obese subjects. Overweight and obese subjects, younger than 47 years, were nearly four times more likely to have periodontal disease than those with a normal BMI.

Tannerella forsythia is a bacteria usually associated with deep pockets. Among subjects in the healthy/gingivitis group, *T forsythia* was found in higher levels in the obese subjects compared to the normal weight subjects.

Clinical Implications: As more research findings are published linking obesity in patients under 47 years of age to a greater risk for periodontitis, more aggressive preventive therapy may be recommended for these patients.

Haffajee, A., Socransky, S.: Relation of Body Mass Index, Periodontitis and *Tannerella forsythia*. *J Clin Perio* 36: 89-99, 2009..