

Strange though it may seem, Dr. C. Michael Willock, a general and holistic dentist in Chapel Hill, is an excellent source for information about supplements and nutrition to support your general and oral health.

An active member of the International Academy of Oral Medicine and Toxicology (IAOMT), he is one of the few dentists in the area trained to safely remove mercury fillings that may be the root cause of health issues for some patients.

"I was at a lecture recently where a distinguished doctor spoke at length about the health benefits of Coenzyme Q10 (CoQ10)—the compound found naturally in the energy-producing center of the cell known as the mitochondria," Dr. Willock reports.

"CoQ10 boosts energy, enhances the immune system, and acts as an antioxidant. It's proven beneficial in the prevention and treatment of many serious health problems—heart disease, diabetes, and breast cancer among them—as well as periodontal disease.

"Clinical studies show that people with gum disease tend to have low levels of CoQ10 in their gums. CoQ10 in supplements induces faster healing and tissue repair. This is the kind of information I regularly share with my patients."

He adds that "Vitamin C is also critically important, and lipo-spheric vitamin C has a much higher level of bio-availability—as much as twice the level as the standard vitamin C supplements. Infection is much more likely if your vitamin C intake is not optimal."

In like manner, Dr. Willock is learning more about the oral and general health benefits of glutathione. "Mercury exposure, such as occurs with amalgam fillings which are up to 50 percent mercury, stresses the immune system. The body's method for excreting mercury has the effect of consuming the antioxidant enzyme glutathione. When that occurs, it has a direct negative effect on the immune system's ability to respond properly to infections and cancer.

"I'm learning, in the many workshops and conferences that I attend, that glutathione is extremely important for a competent immune system. The body uses glutathione to detoxify and excrete mercury, other heavy metals, and numerous toxins. Adequate glutathione levels are essential for the body's energy processes to function properly. For the sake of the health of my patients, it's essential that we understand these basic and important nutritional facts."

## THE LINK: ORAL AND GENERAL HEALTH

"Without good oral health," Dr. Willock explains, "attaining optimal general health is an elusive and basically unattainable goal. The American Academy of Periodontology (AAP) continues to make the case: infections in the mouth can cause major health problems in other organ systems in the body."

AAP studies, he notes, make clear that periodontal bacteria can enter the blood stream and travel to major organs and begin new infections. The consequences, he says, may include the development of heart disease, the country's number one cause of death; an increased risk of stroke; an increase in a woman's risk of having a pre-term, low birth-weight baby; and a serious threat to people whose health is compromised by diabetes, respiratory diseases, or osteoporosis.

"It may seem unlikely and even a bit far-fetched that a little bleeding of the gums may signal the onset or possibility of a major health problem, but it is nonetheless true," the doctor says. And the problem is pervasive: Estimates are that about 15 percent of

adults between 21 and 50 years old, and 30 percent of adults over 50 have periodontal disease—and the incidence increases significantly among pregnant women.

## SCALING AND ROOT PLANING

The most effective way to combat periodontal disease is with scaling and root planning, says Dr. Willock. "This is a common periodontal procedure to clean tooth-root surfaces to remove plaque, tarter, and calculus from deep periodontal pockets, and to smooth the root to remove bacterial toxins."

The importance of scaling and root planning are especially important for women who are pregnant or want to become pregnant. "A report in the *Journal of Periodontology* was based on a study of 366 pregnant women who had periodontitis—which is periodontal disease at a serious level, with destruction of attachment fibers and supporting bone that hold teeth in the mouth. The study found an 84 percent reduction of premature births in women who were less than 35 weeks pregnant, who received scaling and root planning.

"In this practice, we routinely counsel women who are pregnant or thinking of becoming pregnant to receive a full periodontal exam and diagnosis."

The link between periodontal disease and diabetes is also well-established, Dr. Willock notes. "Studies show that people with diabetes are more likely to have periodontal disease than people who don't—probably

because diabetics are more susceptible to contracting infections. It's increasingly clear that patients with poorly controlled type 2 diabetes are more likely to develop periodontal disease than are well-controlled diabetics.

"And the problems flow both ways. People with periodontal disease who have diabetes find it more difficult to control their blood sugar. It's really important that diabetics who have periodontal disease be treated to eliminate the periodontal infection."

## ROAD WARRIOR

Dr. Willock continues to learn about, and be amazed by, connections between oral health and organ systems throughout the body. He continues extensive travels and studies as he broadens his general practice to include many aspects of holistic dentistry, simply, he says, "to better understand and address the overall health concerns of all of my patients. Dental health and physical and emotional health are inextricably linked. My goal is simply to better understand those connections when it is helpful to my patients to do so."

His recent studies, in locations throughout the country, have included gaining expertise in biological dentistry, links between acupuncture meridians and oral health, homeopathic remedies with dental applications, blood chemistry, nutrition and supplementation, environmental and detoxification issues, and critical relationships between oral health and general physical health.

In addition to the IAOMT, Dr. Willock is board-certified by the International Academy of Biological Dentistry and Medicine. He completed an 83-hour post-graduate course in environmental medicine for health care professionals at the Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine, in Scottsdale, Arizona, and continues his studies with Jerry Tennant, MD, at the Tennant Institute for Integrative Medicine in Texas. *h&h*

# Eat Well, Avoid Periodontal Surgery

"Infection is  
much more likely  
if your **VITAMIN C**  
**INTAKE** is  
not optimal."

Patient education and expert care are key ingredients in Dr. Willock's practice.



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