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Gum disease may be linked to abscesses

Acute periapical abscesses may occur more often in patients with periodontal disease than in those without the disease, according to research published in the *Journal of the American Dental Association*.

**By — Ava Barros**

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Acute periapical abscesses (PAs) may occur more often in patients with periodontal disease (PD) than in those without the disease, according to a study published in the *Journal of the American Dental Association*.

Certain genders, ages, and race were more affected, the authors wrote.

"Under the conditions of our study, it appears that the odds for acute PAs are significantly higher in patients with PD seeking treatment for pain due to acute PAs," wrote the authors, Drs. Ilan Rotstein of the University of Southern California Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry and Joseph Katz of the University of Florida College of Dentistry ([JADA](#), January 31, 2025).

The cross-sectional study analyzed patient records from almost 2 million inpatients and outpatients at the University of Florida Health Center. Diagnosis codes for PD and acute PAs were extracted through database queries. The association between PD and acute PAs was assessed using statistical analysis of odds ratios (ORs), they wrote.

A total of 1,168 patients with both acute PAs and PD sought emergency treatment, with females affected more than males. White patients had a higher prevalence than Black patients and mixed ethnic groups. Patients over 18 years old were affected 43 times more than younger patients. The OR for acute PAs in patients with PD was 46.2, showing a statistically significant difference from the total hospital population ($p < .0001$).

However, the study had limitations. PD was evaluated only in patients seeking emergency care for PA-related pain, not in those who did not visit the clinic, the authors added.

"Oral health care professionals should be aware of the possible association between PD and increased occurrence of acute PAs," they concluded.

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