



DENTAL SPECIALTIES | PERIODONTICS

Is gum disease linked to atrial fibrillation?

Researchers at Newcastle Dental Hospital in Tyne, England, will check patients to see if there is a link between gum disease and a heart condition called atrial fibrillation, according to ITV News.

By — Will Morton

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Researchers at Newcastle Dental Hospital in Tyne, England, will check patients to see if there is a link between gum disease and a heart condition called atrial fibrillation (AF), according to [ITV News](#).

The trial will involve 1,000 patients over the age of 65 who will be screened for AF while they wait for their dental appointments. Screening for AF involves using a handheld monitor for 30 seconds. If AF is detected, patients will be referred to their primary care doctors, who will make any clinical decisions that are required.

"There is a growing body of scientific evidence and research suggesting a connection between oral diseases and AF," Dr. Susan Bissett, a lecturer at Newcastle University, said in the article. "This study is looking specifically at the links between gum disease and AF, and the feasibility of screening for AF in a dental setting," she said.

In the U.K., AF affects approximately 2.5% of the population, according to estimates. Symptoms of AF include heart palpitations, where the heart feels like it is pounding, fluttering, or beating irregularly. Yet one-third of people with the condition do not know they have it, because not everyone with AF has symptoms, according to the researchers.

Collaborators on the study include Dr. Lis Neubeck, head of the Centre for Cardiovascular Health at Edinburgh Napier University in Scotland, who added that AF can affect people of all ages, but it is more common in people who are over the age of 65.

"This is such an important study because an AF-related stroke is more likely to be serious than a non-AF-related stroke. Sadly, around 70% die or are left with a permanent disability compared with 55% for non-AF related strokes," she said.

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