Solstice

Steer Clear of Cancer
Keep Your Smile Healthy!

Tips to
Avoid Severe Gum Disease

So what can you do to protect your teeth and avoid such a serious, life-threatening health condition?

We all know the importance of good oral hygiene. No one wants to deal with cavities and the procedures that come along with them: drilling, fillings, root canals, crowns…and on and on. But did you know that chronic gum disease is linked to even more serious health issues? Namely, cancer.

It's scary, but it's true. A recent study conducted by researchers at the State University of New York—Buffalo found that patients diagnosed with head and neck cancer had a significantly higher number of missing teeth and jaw bone loss—indicating chronic gum disease—than those without cancer.

Researchers concluded that the link between bacteria from gum disease and associated immune dysfunction needs to be studied further. There's increasing amounts of research that show chronic inflammation and infection can affect the risk of cancer.

Follow these healthy habits:

- **Brush your teeth.** You should do so twice a day—once in the morning and once before going to bed. Make sure you get the front and back, and also brush your tongue. Weird as that sounds, it's important. Plaque build-up on the tongue can cause bad breath and also can cause bacteria to grow.

- **Consider trying an electric toothbrush.** Because the bristles rotate, this type of toothbrush is better at getting rid of plaque than a regular toothbrush.

- **Swish with mouthwash.** Antiseptic, fluoride or antiplaque mouthwashes can help kill germs that can lead to infection. Plus, they leave your mouth fresh and minty!

- **Use dental floss.** We can all get lazy with this step, but it's really important to floss once a day. A toothbrush alone can't get between the teeth as effectively as floss.

- **Get your regular dental check-ups.** Check your dental insurance coverage, but most offer preventive care—cleanings twice a year—at either no cost or at a co-pay. Your dentist can check out your mouth and detect any potential issues before they become major problems.

The moral of the story?
Keep your teeth clean and healthy in order to avoid a major condition such as cancer. The research tells the risk. It's up to you take care of your mouth and practice good oral hygiene!