



PERIODONTAL HEALTH SPECIALISTS, LLC

Aymee C. Spindler, DDS, LLC Steven J. Spindler, DDS, LLC
2540 Severn Ave., Suite 402 Metairie, LA 70002
office 504.887.8205 | drspindler@bellsouth.net

Chronic Stress, Depression and Cortisol Levels Are Potential Risk Indicators for Periodontal Disease

Researchers evaluated the effects that stress, depression and cortisol may have in the accumulation of dental plaque and gingivitis in individuals 50 years and older.

CHICAGO – May 31, 2006 – Caregivers of people under psychological or physical stress, as well as those with the conditions themselves, should not overlook their oral health, according to a study in the *Journal of Periodontology*. [Study Abstract](#) *

The results from the study suggest that being a caregiver to relatives with dementia, hypercortisolemia (overproduction of cortisol) or stress was associated with elevated plaque levels and increased gingival bleeding in adults aged 50 years and older.

"We found that short-term psychological stress was a risk indicator to elevated plaque levels and long-term physical stress was a risk indicator to gingivitis," said Fernando N. Hugo, DDS and Faculty of Dentistry of Piracicaba, Brazil. "These findings support the health impact of psychosocial risk factors from chronic stress, which may lead to malfunction of some biological functions."

The study indicates that the demanding task of caregiving, usually associated with increased stress, may also be a risk factor for poor oral hygiene. These findings point out that stress may contribute to a disinterest in performing oral hygiene.

"Flossing and brushing the teeth and gums had a protective effect against plaque and gingivitis," said [Kenneth A. Krebs](#), DMD and AAP president. "That said, future research is needed to explore the relationship between stress and oral hygiene negligence."

In this study, 230 individuals were evaluated, and almost 52 percent were caregivers. Caregivers of patients with dementia were examined because they represent a well-known group suffering from the impacts of chronic stress on human health and immune functions. The results are among the first in literature to suggest that caregivers of relatives with dementia are at risk of having more plaque and gingivitis than non-caregivers.

* EDITOR'S NOTE: Representatives of the media may contact the AAP Public