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Rejected by the Dentist! Heart attacks, dental health, and urban myths

October is **National Dental Hygiene Month**

(<http://www.adha.org/ndhm/index.html>) and we came across an interesting discussion on the WomenHeart online support community, with the heading "Rejected by the dentist!". "Gingerp" was at her dentist for her routine teeth cleaning and when her dentist asked her if she'd had any recent changes in her health, she told him that she'd had a heart attack four weeks earlier. "He moved away as if I had told him I had leprosy," reported Gingerp, and then told her that she couldn't have any "preventive, non-urgent dental care" until she was out of the high risk period for a second heart attack — six months.

Turns out that this may not be an uncommon story among women with heart disease, although other dentists may have had a better chairside manner. Gingerp, concerned that she shouldn't neglect her dental health, did some checking and later posted this update: "Please be aware that even the American Dental Association has noted a study that teeth cleaning just one month after an MI can be fine. I had mine cleaned 6 weeks post-MI by my new, up-to-date dentist after firing my last one. Please read **this article** (<http://jada.ada.org/cgi/content/full/137/5/576>) and spread the word. I am working with the AHA and dental colleges to correct this terrible disservice to heart attack survivors."

Several studies have shown possible links between poor dental health and heart disease, and research continues to look at many issues, including a connection between plaque build-up on both the teeth and arteries. Dentists may prescribe antibiotics to certain heart patients prior to oral surgery, but the **ADA recommendations** (<http://www.ada.org/3874.aspx?currentTab=1>) primarily focus on patients with artificial heart valves, a history of infective endocarditis, and certain congenital heart conditions.

Thanks to Gingerp for beginning an important discussion while also debunking an urban myth. And don't neglect your oral health because it could have real impact on your heart health!

AHA: Dental care and heart disease

<http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=4548>