

We give you  
more reasons to  
**smile**

## *The Heart of the Matter*



### *Did you know that research shows a link between gum disease and heart disease and stroke?*

Heart disease was the leading cause of death in the U.S. in 2004.<sup>1</sup> And now, evidence continues to mount suggesting that people with periodontal (gum) disease, a bacterial infection, may be more at risk for heart disease and strokes. Why? Because bacteria and its byproducts from the gum tissues may enter the blood stream, and cause small blood clots that may contribute to the clogging of arteries. The inflammation caused by gum disease may also contribute to the buildup of fatty deposits inside heart arteries.

#### **The good news is that gum disease is preventable!**

Although you can't guarantee you'll never have a heart attack, you may be able to reduce your risk by daily brushing and flossing. Do this everyday in the comfort of your own home – it's easy, convenient, and affordable! Visit your dentist for an exam and cleaning twice a year (or as your dentist recommends) because sometimes gum disease is invisible.

If plaque is not removed each day by brushing and flossing, it hardens into a rigid mineralized substance called tartar. Even if you think you're doing a GREAT job flossing, plaque can still remain in your mouth. Only a dental professional can remove the tartar and plaque you may miss at home.

#### **Warning signs you may have gum disease include:**

- Red, swollen or tender gums
- Bleeding while brushing or flossing
- Gums that pull away from the teeth and/or loose or separating teeth
- Persistent bad breath

#### **Prevention is Powerful!**

#### **Keep your mouth healthy using these tips:**

- Brush twice a day
- Floss once a day, preferably at night (Brushing doesn't clean between teeth)
- Get regular dental check-ups



<sup>1</sup>cdc.gov- National Center for  
Health Statistics

*For more information, visit us on the web at [www.cigna.com](http://www.cigna.com)*

"CIGNA Dental" refers to the following operating subsidiaries of CIGNA Corporation: Connecticut General Life Insurance Company, and CIGNA Dental Health, Inc. and its operating subsidiaries and affiliates. This document is provided by CIGNA solely for informational purposes to promote consumer health. It does not constitute medical advice and is not intended to be a substitute for proper dental care provided by a dentist. CIGNA assumes no responsibility for any circumstances arising out of the use, misuse, interpretation or application of any information supplied in this document. Always consult with your doctor for appropriate examinations, treatment, testing, and care recommendations.