

Experts Say New CDC Research Has Two Important Messages for Dental Clinicians

A widely reported study this fall¹—conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and American Academy of Periodontology (AAP)—suggests the prevalence of periodontal disease in US adults has been underestimated by up to 50%. The underestimate was attributed to data from partial- rather than full-mouth periodontal exams used in recent National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys (NHANES).

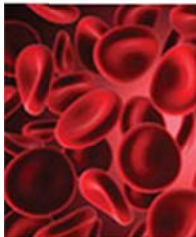
The findings raise concerns about oral health in America. But what do they mean for dental clinicians?

"This is a call to action for all dental professionals to continue their diligence in evaluating their patients' periodontal health," said AAP immediate past president Samuel Low, DDS.

Low and lead CDC researcher, Paul Eke PhD, said the study supports two important points:



- 1. Full-mouth probing and charting are a must for your patients**
"Every dentist should conduct a comprehensive periodontal evaluation on an annual basis on every patient," contend Low and Eke. For an accurate diagnosis, they recommend full-mouth probing and charting, as opposed to a partial-mouth exam. "We consider this the gold standard," says Low. "The study reinforces that periodontal disease affects gums around teeth differently from site to site."



- 2. Helping your patients maintain healthy teeth and gums is more important than ever**
"This study suggests periodontal disease is a larger public health issue than previously thought," says Low. And the potential link between periodontal and systemic health must continue to be studied. "So, educating your patients about periodontal disease and the importance of good oral care is critical," he says. Regularly inquiring about risk factors and health status can also help.

REFERENCE: 1. Eke PI, Thornton-Evans GO, Wei L, et al. Accuracy of NHANES periodontal examination protocols. *J Dent Res* 2010 Nov;89(11):1208-1213.