

Vascular disease

Beware of our #1 killer

My dad suffered six strokes in seven years before he died. Each one took a little more of the man I loved so dearly. The doctors were baffled because he had never been diagnosed with cardiovascular disease (CVD) or hypertension. Hiding in his artery walls, just waiting to explode, lived a team of oral bacteria, in a pod of inflammation. My dad had full-blown, uncontrolled periodontal disease (PD).

Like my dad, a stroke or heart attack might just be your first indication of full blown CVD. And if you wait till then, modern medicine can only offer you heroic treatment methods—with hit-or-miss outcomes. I hope my story instead makes you want to predict and prevent disease.

Arterial disease is about inflammation. Decrease your inflammation you'll cool down your vessels—you'll reduce the risk of plaque accumulation in the walls of your arteries—the time bombs waiting to erupt to obstruct the vessels.

Ridding your body of inflammation is certainly not a one-size-fits-all plan however. The strategy must be based on what we know about YOU: your lifestyle, your genetics, your current blood markers and your personal genetic biomarkers.

Want to identify some red flags?

Does your medical history include: autoimmune disorders, periodontal disease, hypertension, migraine history, thyroid dysfunction, rheumatoid arthritis, breast cancer, insulin resistance, diabetes, or erectile dysfunction? Do your lifestyle struggles include: lack of sleep, kidney/gall stones, dining out frequently, PPI drugs for reflux, or high stress? Do you have any of the physical signs: baldness, ear creases (Franks sign), A-fib, red or bleeding gums?

Gum disease is a serious threat to your CV health. To assess your personal risk factors, visit SelfScreen.net and click on our practice to take the periodontal disease risk assessment test. Keep track of your risk factors so you can ask your hygienist and dentist to help you with additional feedback such as probing depths and bleeding response.

If you have a PD diagnosis, treatment can mitigate your systemic vascular health. Unfortunately, it's not just about scraping your teeth with a sharp instrument. We first need to understand which of the seven most CVD-threatening bugs are

present. Through a swish-and-spit test you can identify above-threshold levels and we can go after them with a vengeance.

Do not rely on a stress test—which just measures adequate blood flow in your vessels. It doesn't identify what's going on in your vessel walls ... the time bomb just waiting to ignite. Rupture of plaque in the vessel causes an immediate blood clot which means heart attack or stroke.

Is it there? FIND IT. And if present, monitor it.

In 2000 the AHA recommended Carotid (neck) vessel ultrasound imaging as a good indicator to what's going on in your heart and brain vessels. CIMT is safe, non invasive, relatively inexpensive and available in our community and if you haven't done it, do!



Dr. Susan Maples is a dentist in Holt. She is also a speaker, health educator and author of Blabbermouth. Learn more at drsusanmaples.com or call (517) 694.0353.

Take a periodontal disease risk assessment test at SelfScreen.net or use the QR code



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