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How Cavity Causing Microbes Invade The Heart

BY ADMIN ON JANUARY 26, 2012 · LEAVE A COMMENT · IN UNCATEGORIZED

How Cavity-Causing Microbes Invade the Heart

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The identification of the protein that allows

Streptococcus mutans to establish a foothold in heart tissue is reported in the June issue of *Infection and Immunity* by microbiologists at the U. of Rochester Medical Center. This bacterium is renowned among dentists to be the primary cause of dental caries (decay). It is commonly known that patients with periodontal disease are especially prone to the invasion of microorganisms into the bloodstream. The immune system usually destroys them, however prior research has determined that is not always the case, and these organisms can colonize on heart valves resulting in bacterial endocarditis. The disease can eventually be deadly.

Jacqueline Abranches, PhD, a microbiologist became intrigued about how these oral residents found their way to the heart. She and her colleagues found a collagen-binding protein that gives *S. mutans* the ability to invade heart tissue. She has identified five specific strains of *S. mutans* out of more than three dozen that can carry the protein which enable invasion of heart tissue. She hopes she can isolate a bio-marker that will enable dentists to identify the marker and therefore treat patients accordingly. Meanwhile, since it has been proven chronic oral infections, the most prevalent being periodontal disease, can indeed be responsible for contributing to heart disease, patients must be diagnosed early and treated as well as shown preventive methods for maintaining optimum oral health. The American Dental Association has estimated for many decades that conservatively 70 percent of adults in the USA have some areas of undiagnosed periodontal disease existing in their mouths. They should be informed of the importance of regular dental exams,

including non-painful probing with a periodontal probe for an accurate and early diagnosis of this disease that can have such devastating ramifications within and extending beyond the oral cavity.

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