



Flossing and stroke prevention: an overlooked public health opportunity

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Dear Editor,

Maintaining good oral hygiene is well-documented to play a vital role in preventing oral diseases.¹ However, the connection extends far beyond the mouth. Research increasingly links oral health to the development and progression of systemic conditions, including car-diovascular disease, diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, and Alzheimer's disease.² Therefore, oral health is not merely about healthy teeth and gums; it is an integral component of overall well-being and disease prevention.

One of the biggest concerns after COVID-19 is strokes, which have been rapidly increasing in recent times and are a leading cause of disability and mortality globally.³ While medical advancements have provided various strategies to mitigate the risk of ischemic stroke,⁴ a recent study conducted by researchers in the United States highlights a remarkably simple preventative measure: flossing.⁵

The Atherosclerosis Risk in Communities (ARIC) study examined the relationship between flossing, incident stroke, stroke subtypes, and atrial fibrillation in over 6,000 dentate

participants who were monitored for a period of over 25 years. Approximately 65% of the participants reported flossing at least once a week. The analysis indicated that regular flossing, compared to non-flossers, was associated with a 22% reduction in the risk of ischemic stroke, a 44% reduction in the risk of cardioembolic stroke, and a 12% reduction in the risk of atrial fibrillation. These findings suggest that flossing at least once a week is linked to a decreased risk of stroke due to blood clots and irregular heart rhythms.⁵

This research highlights how crucial good oral hygiene is for our overall health and indicates that something as simple and inexpensive as regular flossing could be a game-changer in preventing strokes, with the potential to save countless lives, reinforcing the vital link between a healthy mouth and a healthy body.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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