Source: J Clin Periodontol. 2010 Feb;37(2):172-9
Title: Visceral fat area-defined obesity and periodontitis among Koreans.
Author: Han DH, Lim SY, et al.

Overview: This study evaluated the relationship between waist circumference (WC), body mass index (BMI) and other indicators of obesity, to the development of periodontitis.

Summary of research:

- 1046 subjects enrolled in study, 15 years of age and older
- Periodontal and medical health evaluated
- The contribution of individual indicators of obesity to periodontitis was studied

Results and conclusions:

- The greater the BMI, WC and visceral fat area (VFA) the greater the number of sextants with periodontitis
- Greatest association found between VFA and periodontitis in males, 45-54 years old
- Obesity may be a substantial risk factor for periodontitis

Key take-aways:
A number of studies have evaluated the relationship between obesity and gum disease. This study evaluated the overall association and the specific effects of individual indicators of obesity. The high prevalence of both obesity and periodontal disease (PD) poses a substantial public health risk. Dental providers should anticipate a higher incidence of gum disease among this patient population.

Implementation Strategies:
What an interesting piece of research! Who could have imagined that we would be considering obesity as a risk factor for PD? Dr. Russell Tracy, a professor of pathology and biochemistry at the University of Vermont states, "Obesity promotes inflammation because fat cells produce cytokines, the proteins that promote inflammation." According to Carranza's 2002 9th Edition of Clinical Periodontology, 'PD is an inflammatory disease of all the supporting tissues of the teeth caused by specific or groups of specific microorganisms…' PD also results in the production of cytokines contributing to the patient's overall inflammatory burden. The link between obesity and PD is inflammation. While we may not be able to have a direct impact on a patients' BMI, WC or VFA, we certainly can and should be eliminating or controlling the inflammatory contribution of PD by intervening and treating early. Healthy gums don't bleed and research such as this reminds us that there is more at stake than tooth loss!

Richard Nagelberg, DDS & Kim Miller, RDH, BSDH, RDHMP
531 West Germantown Pike Suite 104
Plymouth Meeting, PA 19462

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Richard Nagelberg, DDS & Kim Miller, RDH, BSDH, RDHMP
531 West Germantown Pike Suite 104
Plymouth Meeting, PA 19462