

# National **HEALTH**

Complimentary

## Review

Brevard's Medical and Wellness Source

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## **STROKE**

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Could YOU Be At Risk?

Also...

**Bipolar Disorder**

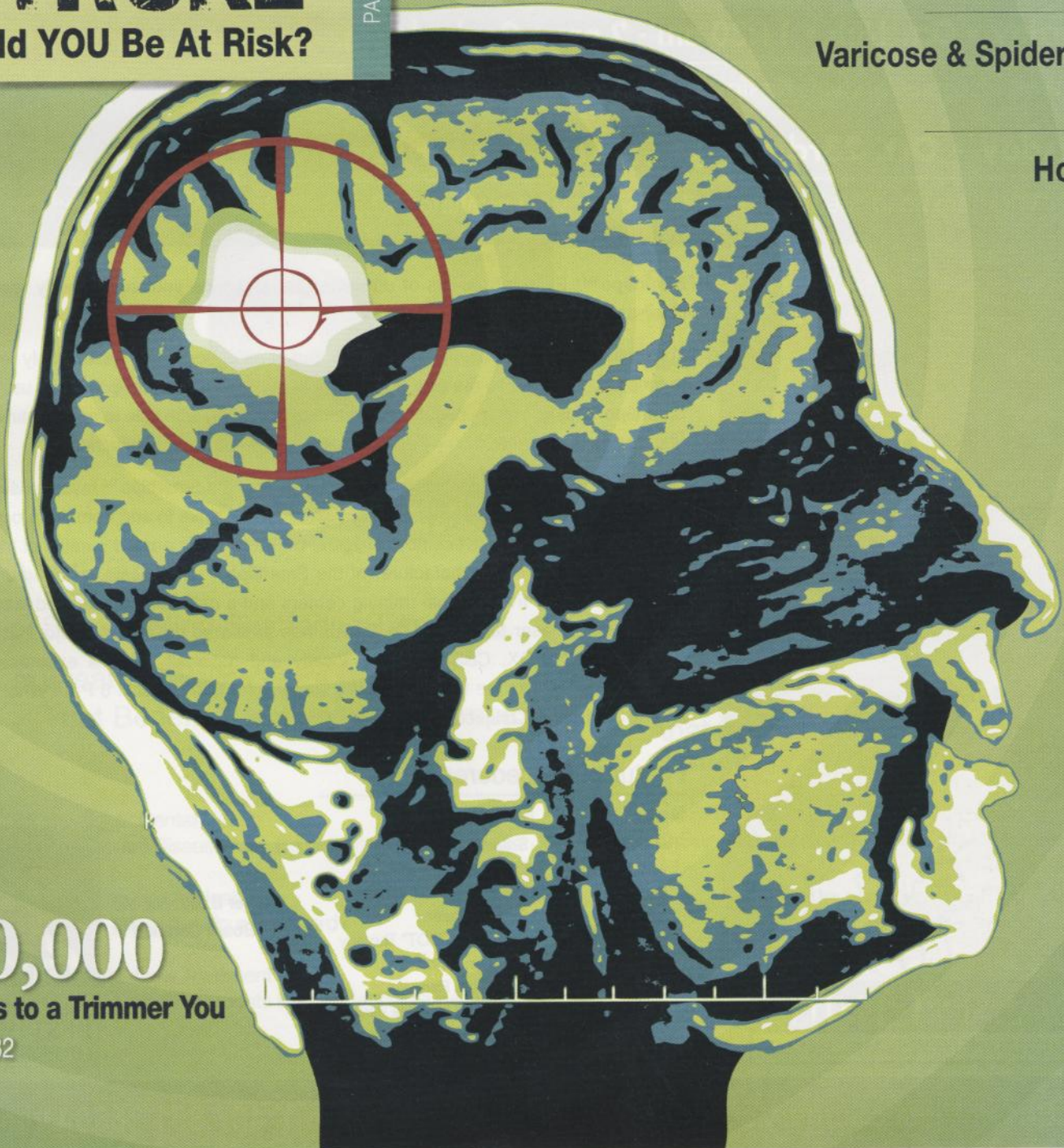
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**Varicose & Spider Veins**

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# 10,000

Steps to a Trimmer You

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# Spotlight: Dental Health

## Periodontal Disease May Be Linked to Heart Disease

By Chris Edwards, D.D.S.

Research has shown repeatedly that inflammation is linked to heart disease. Some ongoing causes of inflammation in the body are aging – especially in post-menopausal women – diet, lack of exercise and smoking. Periodontal disease and other dental infections of the teeth also have been named as sources of inflammation in the body.

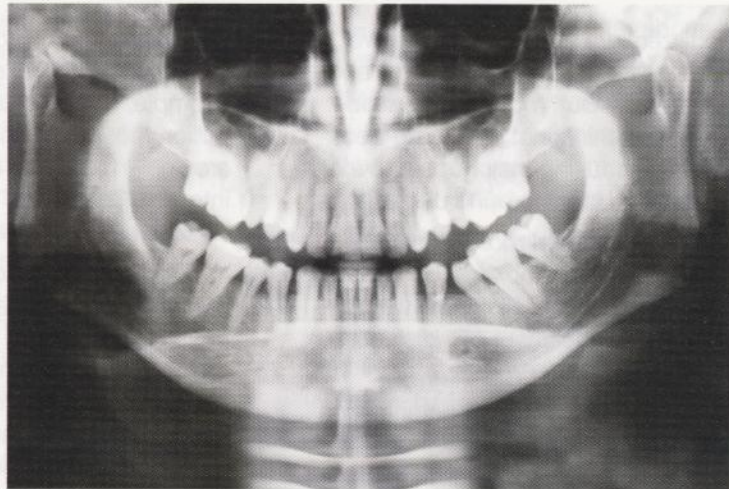
Periodontal disease occurs when gums become inflamed due to excessive amounts of bacteria in the mouth. The body's disease-fighting immune system is unable to destroy the bacteria in the crevices and crannies of the mouth, especially on the roots of the teeth and under the gums. Instead, bacteria must be removed by the patient through daily brushing and flossing and via regular teeth cleaning from a dental professional.

Dental plaque is the result of excess bacteria buildup on the exposed surfaces of the tooth, both above and below the gum line. It takes approximately 24 hours for plaque to organize on the surface of the tooth to trigger a reaction of the body's immune system. This early stage of inflammation is called gingivitis and is marked by tenderness in the tooth and gum line, swelling and a dark pink or reddish appearance of the gums. Bleeding sometimes accompanies regular tooth brushing and flossing when gingivitis is active.

Advanced cases of periodontal disease, called periodontitis, are evidenced by more complex and pathogenic bacteria colonizing in deeper areas under the gums called "pockets." These bacteria may enter the blood stream to cause illness or influence the plaques in the arteries of the circulatory system.

It is widely believed that periodontal inflammation and plaque buildup in the arteries that lead to the heart may be a pre-cursor to other ailments, including heart attack and stroke. Research continues to uncover the actual relationships between dental health and its impact on systemic body health.

Although periodontal disease may be linked to heart disease, more studies are needed to determine whether one actually causes the other. Until more is known, be conscientious about oral care and treating gum disease to protect your teeth, your gums and possibly, your heart! ♥



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