

The Hidden Epidemic Fueling Cancer and Heart Disease

Analysis by [Dr. Joseph Mercola](#)

✓ Fact Checked

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › Oral infections such as periodontitis and abscesses are the most common infections in the world and frequently are a stealth contributor to chronic diseases such as breast cancer and heart disease
- › Everybody thinks an infected tooth will trigger enormous pain, but chronically abscessed teeth have no discomfort at all well over 95% of the time
- › To identify asymptomatic abscesses, you need to get a 3D cone beam exam done. This is particularly important if you're struggling with a chronic health condition, be it an autoimmune disease, cancer, heart disease or any degenerative disease
- › Typically, periodontitis will precede an abscess. Once the gum inflammation gets bad enough and permits oral pathogens to reach the apex of the tooth, the abscess begins to form
- › Irrigating between your teeth with hydrogen peroxide water is one of the most effective strategies for reversing periodontitis. You also want to make sure you have adequate vitamin C, as the hydrogen peroxide and vitamin C work in tandem to eradicate pathogens and eliminate infection

In this interview, repeat guest Dr. Thomas Levy, a board-certified cardiologist, shares his insights into an oft-forgotten and overlooked area of health, namely your oral health.

Oral infections are frequently a stealth contributor to chronic diseases such as breast cancer and heart disease. Levy became intrigued by the influence of oral health after

meeting one of the pioneers in this field, Dr. Hal Huggins, who became one of his primary mentors.

As with his previous book, “[Rapid Virus Recovery](#),” in which he details the use of nebulized hydrogen peroxide, Levy is giving away his book on oral health for free. You can download “[Hidden Epidemic: Silent Oral Infections Cause Most Heart Attacks and Breast Cancers](#)” on MedFox Publishing’s website.

The Importance of 3D Cone Beam Imaging

“Hidden Epidemic” is an apt title, as this issue is flying well below the radar of most health professionals. This, despite the fact that probably 95% of the population, or more, have some sort of infection in their mouth that is influencing their health in a negative way.

“Part of my initial journey was seeing what Dr. Huggins was doing, in addition to [his use of vitamin C and] taking out mercury fillings ... he also focused on Dr. Weston Price’s work, which shows that root canals are chronically infected, all of them,” Levy says.

“This was later documented by the work that Dr. Huggins did with Dr. Boyd Haley at the University of Kentucky. They had over 5,000 root canaled teeth extracted by dentists around the country submitted to them. They did sophisticated testing and found extremely potent toxins and anaerobic bacteria in all of them.

It brought out the point that infected teeth are the nuclear bomb of oxidative stress. All diseases [are] caused by oxidative stress and the lion’s share of oxidative stress is caused by chronic infections.”

Levy co-wrote a book about these findings with Dr. Robert Kulacz called “The Toxic Tooth.” About four or five years ago, Levy convinced a friend that she needed to extract three root canaled teeth. To get the lay of the land, he accompanied her to her 3D cone

beam examination. 3D cone beam imaging is a very sophisticated in-depth examination that provides far more information than your average dental X-ray.

An ordinary X-ray (panorex), can find up to 40% of dental abscesses. If you do a slightly more sophisticated digital subtraction, you might add another 10% or 20%. The 3D cone beam examination, however, can find all of them. Levy explains:

"It's three-dimensional, and they rotate it around your head. It's tomography, they take slices. You can literally look at every part of the head. There's a lot of information in there other than teeth, but it's the only way we can currently detect small, otherwise undetectable, abscessed teeth.

This is important because once a tooth has an abscess, no matter how small, that tooth is dead and it's just accumulating infection that can disseminate throughout the rest of your body ...

[A 3D cone beam examination] is truly the single most important thing that can be done for a heart disease, a heart attack patient or a breast cancer patient, in addition to many other diseases but those are the two biggies. If this is not done, they're missing — probably greater than 90% of the time — the true reason why they have that condition in the first place."

Stealth Oral Infections Are Amazingly Common

Looking at the 3D images, it became apparent that Levy's friend would need a fourth tooth extracted. Adjacent to the three **root canaled teeth** was another tooth with an abscess so large it protruded into her sinus cavity. Hers is the image on the cover of "Hidden Epidemic."

The odd part about this was she had no pain in that tooth. Not then and not ever. This made Levy convinced that abscessed teeth could well be far more widespread than previously imagined.

In speaking with dentists, Levy also realized that most dentists fail to realize that horribly abscessed teeth can be clinically silent. You can chew on them, they feel fine, they don't ache or hurt. Everybody thinks an infected tooth will trigger enormous pain, but chronically abscessed teeth have no discomfort at all well over 95% of the time.

"One dentist I talked to that had seen my book ['The Toxic Tooth: How a Root Canal Could Be Making You Sick'] said, 'Hey, I got a 3D cone beam exam and [patients have] those abscesses all over the place.

What are you supposed to do?' I was stunned. I said, 'They're infected dead teeth. They need to come out of the body, and then you need to do a restoration, something along the lines of a bridge or an implant. But if you're concerned about your patient's health, they can't stay inside the body.'"

Root Canals 101

To briefly summarize the conventional approach, when you have an abscess, the typical intervention recommended would be to perform a **root canal**. Levy explains:

"A root canal is basically where they shave off the top of the tooth and go inside with little roto-rooter cores, and they actually pull and scrape out the inner pulp of the tooth. The pulp is the nerve connective vascular center of the tooth. It has all the nerves, all the blood supply. The reason somebody goes to see the dentist with this type of tooth is because it hurts.

So, primarily, the root canal procedure is a pain relief procedure, but it's not an infection eradication procedure. It's basically like, if you have an abscess on your arm and it hurts, rather than take care of the abscess and drain it and cure it, all you do is snip all the nerves going to it so that you don't feel pain from the abscess anymore. That's pretty much the same with the root canaled tooth.

The problem is, once that pulp is infected, the tooth is dead. They say, well, if you feel pain, it can't be dead. But you're not feeling pain from the core of the tooth, you're feeling pain from the connective tissue around the tooth, from the

infection that goes down into the root of the tooth. Just because there's pain does not rule out that the tooth is technically dead.

With a root canal, you've effectively taxidermized the tooth. You basically just put the tooth in a state of technical preservation, not infection elimination. And in both 'Hidden Epidemic' and in 'The Toxic Tooth,' we go through reams of literature.

Believe me, there's a ton of literature that shows how toxic these teeth are, how closely they correlate with coronary artery disease and cancers everywhere else through the body. So, it's always a nasty scenario to have a chronically infected tooth stay in your body.

The other thing too is, when you chew on it, what happens? Every time you chew on something that has a big abscess at the root tip, you actually push pathogens and toxins into the draining venous and lymphatic circulation more effectively than if you just gave something intravenously, pushed with a syringe, to disseminate throughout the body."

Periodontitis and Its Connection to Disease

In the interview, I share my own experience with a stealth abscess, which I discovered in the weeks before the [COVID-19 pandemic](#). I also found out I had periodontitis, which can exacerbate or trigger just about any chronic disease. As noted by Levy, periodontitis has "a cause and effect relationship with most diseases in the body."

Typically, the periodontitis precedes the abscess. Once the gum inflammation gets bad enough and permits oral pathogens to reach the apex of the tooth, the abscess begins to form. A chronically abscessed tooth is known as a "chronic apical periodontitis tooth." "It's very difficult to have a chronically abscessed tooth in pristine normal gums, it just really doesn't happen," Levy says.

Once you have inflammation in the gums, however, pathogens seep into the lymph every time you chew, making its way to the breast tissue. It also seeps into your venous

system, which leads into the left atrium and left ventricle of your heart. Your venous system going to the heart is low pressure, and as it exits the left ventricle it gets pushed out with very high pressure.

"This means that the content that previously traveled through the venous system without any problem suddenly goes out from the left ventricle with great force, and the coronary artery receiving roughly 25% of the cardiac output gets the lion's share of the pathogens that are first exposed to high systemic pressures," Levy explains.

"Clear-cut data show virtually 100% of atherosclerotic plaques are colonized by periodontal pathogen. Plain and simple, it's another form of what we call the chronic pathogen colonization in 'Rapid Virus Recovery,' which is discussed at some length. There's actually a most incredible study from 2006 by Dr. Ott. Ott did angiograms with what's called atherectomy.

The atherectomy is basically like a coronary roto rooter. They just take a device and core out, scrape out the atherosclerotic plaque. He did this in 38 chronic coronary artery disease patients, examined them, and found an array, most of the time over 50 different periodontal and oral pathogens of all varieties. He found them in 38 out of 38 patients ...

And then finally, the coup de grace, if you will, was when Dr. Pessi in Finland coordinated a study ... to immediately angiogram acute heart attack patients. Most heart attacks occur when you have a preexisting narrowing that suddenly occludes when you block it off with an acute platelet clot. So, you go immediately from a 70% to 100%, 85% to 100% blockage of the coronary artery.

Well, they went in on these acute heart attack patients and suctioned out those soft platelet clots and analyzed them. Over 80% had an extremely high concentration of the periodontal pathogens in up to 1,600% higher concentration than in the surrounding blood. Now, do we really think a blood clot formed and suddenly pathogens got attracted to it?

No, it was the preexistence of those pathogens that caused the [blockage]. And the same thing happens in the breast, but we're not talking about the vascular system there but the lymphatic system. So, the bottom line is we have the data ... to show that the mouth causes heart attacks; the mouth causes cancer."

Researchers have also shown that periodontitis can make your microbiome abnormal. As you chew, the pathogens are pushed out and swallowed. Once in your gut, they disrupt your gut microbiome, resulting in leaky gut, and this too "either causes or always exacerbates any preexisting diseases," Levy says.

Diseases Associated With Periodontitis

In his book, "Hidden Epidemic," Levy provides a comprehensive list of diseases that periodontitis is associated with. Two of the most prevalent ones are heart disease and cancers, especially [breast cancer](#). Research shows people with abscessed teeth, even when completely asymptomatic, have a fivefold greater chance of [heart attack](#) than the general population.

Some detractors will say this is merely an association, not correlation. But there are other studies showing that chronic periodontitis exacerbates disease. For example, researchers have found chronic periodontitis worsens asthma, and when you effectively treat the periodontitis, the asthma either goes into remission or becomes easier to manage. When the periodontitis is allowed to flourish again, the asthma comes back.

"I find it difficult to get around the fact that that's a cause and effect," Levy says. "Even if there's an underlying problem causing the asthma, clearly the periodontitis has a cause and effect relationship as to how severe that particular condition is."

Other chronic conditions with known links to periodontitis include but are not limited to:

Lupus and other autoimmune diseases

[Inflammatory bowel disease](#)

Crohn's disease

[Ulcerative colitis](#)

Multiple sclerosis	Preeclampsia
Maternal hypertension	Alzheimer's disease
Chronic kidney disease	Sudden hearing loss
Erectile dysfunction	Congenital vascular disease

Levy says:

"[In] Dr. Huggins' clinic, lots of people with vascular disease, autoimmune diseases, including lupus, with high antinuclear antibody titers would come in and, not all of them, but a substantial number of them, by the time they finished their program, in just two weeks, their antinuclear antibodies had severely dropped in titers or even disappeared.

I became convinced, and I am very convinced now, that you can't have an autoimmune disease, per se, if you don't have chronic infection because somewhere, not necessarily in the gums, it could be other sources, but statistically speaking, it's most commonly going to be from the mouth. Also, any time you've had chronic periodontitis, one or two root canals, a chronically abscessed tooth, you have chronically infected tonsils ...

Although treating disease is rarely straightforward – it's complex, involves protocols, different things – in my opinion, the etiology of disease is straightforward.

The etiology of all disease is increased oxidation of biomolecules. As biomolecules oxidize, electrons are taken away, and they become inactivated. And their inactivation, their inability to have their normal function, is the disease. You don't have any additional disease process going on other than how much protein, sugar, enzymes and various distributions of biomolecules that you have oxidized.

In the case of a brief but acute illness that causes a lot of oxidation, high amounts of antioxidants, such as vitamin C and other electron donors, can resolve the disease. That's not the case with chronic disease, however. With chronic disease, it appears all you can do is lessen it, mitigate it, make it better.

Way back when I was talking about this with Dr. Huggins, he rolled his eyes back at me in his delightful sarcastic fashion and said, 'Tom ... You can't dry off while you're still in the shower.' That, in a nutshell shined a spotlight on the fact that modern medicine does not prevent nor resolve. They just treat symptoms. They don't address the underlying disease, they don't repair tissues, and they never look at what's causing the oxidative damage."

Effective Treatment Requires Quelling Inflow of Toxicity

While alternative and integrative medicine is getting very good at repairing oxidative damage that's already present, many still fail to effectively prevent new damage from occurring. When you have an infection in your mouth, your system is flooded with new pathogens 24/7. The constant onslaught makes it very difficult to resolve a chronic condition.

"It saddens me every time I hear somebody say, 'I went through this great alternative doc and I'm getting better and my breast lump is going down.' And I say, 'Well did he do any examination of your mouth?' They say, 'What are you talking about?'

I ask 'Do you have any root canals?' 'Yeah, I have a couple, but they're fine.' Well, they're not fine. And when you do thermography, you can see the red lines going from the heated areas of abscess streaking right on down into the breasts. Of course, you can't see it with the heart disease, but it's the same thing with the heart.

So, in a nutshell then, modern medicine doesn't recognize or acknowledge what causes disease and it doesn't really care what cures the disease. All it's

dedicated to is symptom relief and trying to make you feel better while staying on a medicine the rest of your life.

Integrative medicine always looks at trying to resolve oxidative damage and is starting to appreciate that we need to look for these causative factors that are producing the oxidative damage and keeping the patient from complete clinical resolution.”

Aside from abscessed teeth, certain dietary components can also drive harmful oxidation. Some of the most damaging are industrial vegetable oils and seed oils, which are loaded with oxidized linoleic acid (LA), an omega-6 fat. As detailed in [“How Linoleic Acid Wrecks Your Health,”](#) the primary way LA destroys your health is by radically increasing oxidative stress. So, radically limiting or eliminating processed seed oils from your diet can make a big difference.

Who Should Get a 3D Cone Beam Exam?

Whether you have discernible symptoms of a dental abscess or not, if you have a chronic health condition, your first step would be to get a 3D cone beam exam done. Levy recommends this for children as well, especially if they have [cancer](#).

“If your 5-year-old gets leukemia or a brain tumor or something like that, they need to have this test done because kids get abscessed infected teeth too that are pain-free just like adults,” he says.

“The other example I like to use too is, when you're an athlete — you're in your 20s and in perfect health — it's still a good idea, as part of your baseline examinations, to get this exam. If you have healthy teeth, great. Then when you're 35, 40 years old, you start getting aches and pains, your blood sugar goes up, you're getting a new disease. Then you repeat that test to see if something new has developed.”

If you worry about radiation exposure, know that this imaging technology uses about 90% less radiation than a conventional CT scan. You can also minimize oxidative stress

from the radiation by fasting the day before and the day after the test, and/or drinking a pint of high-concentration molecular hydrogen water created from the tablets, not a hydrogen water generator. That's what I do when I get these tests.

How to Address Oral Infections

In early stages of abscess, dental [ozone therapy](#) can be very useful and might save the tooth by eradicating the infection. In severe cases, however, the tooth simply must be extracted. The damage is done and you cannot fix it. The tooth is dead and must be removed or else infection will return again and again.

“ Warm water and a given amount of hydrogen peroxide in a water irrigation device consistently and amazingly can resolve even advanced periodontal disease in just a few weeks. ~ Dr. Thomas Levy ”

Naturally, the earlier you intervene, the better your chances of success. Remember, periodontitis precedes the abscess, so treating gum inflammation is crucial.

Here, irrigating with hydrogen peroxide can be very effective. Simply add hydrogen peroxide to your dental irrigator. I put about half a dropperful of 12% food grade hydrogen peroxide into my Waterpik irrigation water, plus one-eighth teaspoon of unprocessed salt and one-eighth teaspoon of sodium bicarbonate or potassium bicarbonate.

“Warm water and a given amount of hydrogen peroxide in a water irrigation device consistently and amazingly can resolve even advanced periodontal disease in just a few weeks,” Levy says.

“When you get rid of these pathogens, the gums spring back to life. I saw one lady who had no gum coming up between her teeth, just little flat lines, and I got her on this. Two weeks later, she had the healthiest looking little peaks of gum

going on in there. With the waterpik and the tiny amount of hydrogen peroxide as part of your regular oral hygiene, there's no need – and I would say even a contra indication – to do regular flossing.

Flossing, unless it's done perfectly, and very few people do it perfectly, you're always chronically damaging the gums and it's not as good. If you floss and then waterpik, you'll see stuff come out. If you waterpik and then floss, you're not going to get anything more.”

Hydrogen Peroxide and Vitamin C Work Hand in Hand

In addition to irrigating with hydrogen peroxide, you also need to ensure you have an adequate **vitamin C** level. The hydrogen peroxide needs to be married with vitamin C for optimal effect. Smokers deplete their vitamin C stores in the gums and other tissues, which is why smokers are so prone to periodontitis and heart disease. But nonsmokers also tend to have depleted vitamin C stores that will prevent the elimination of pathogens. The same is true for acute viral infections.

In addition to vitamin C depletion, pathogenic infections are fueled by the presence of iron. So, the more iron there is, the more the infection flourishes. Iron is also a pro-oxidant in and of itself. When vitamin C enters a cell, it releases an electron, turning ferric iron into ferrous iron. Ferrous iron is biochemically compatible with passing that electron on to the hydrogen peroxide, which breaks down into a hydroxyl radical that causes oxidative stress, which in turn kills the pathogen.

The key point is you need to continuously have enough vitamin C, iron and hydrogen peroxide in your system so that the Fenton reaction can operate and destroy all the pathogens present, or else they'll just replicate and take over again.

“Also, guess what else the vitamin C does? Outside of the cell, it's the most powerful producer of new hydrogen peroxide. So, at the same time the vitamin C is going into the cell, it's producing more peroxide outside of the cell, which is a nonionic tiny molecule that diffuses into the cell. The hydrogen peroxide, once it's inside the cell, mobilizes new iron from the ferritin storage sites.

So, you have a situation where you've completely allowed unlimited amounts of the three substrates in the Fenton reaction to continue to completion until it's done its pro-oxidative killing task. So, in every sense of the word, hydrogen peroxide is the effector arm of vitamin C's ability to kill a pathogen," Levy explains.

So, the take-home message here is that whether you're dealing with an oral infection, or an infection caused by, say, a virus, vitamin C in combination with hydrogen peroxide can effectively address the infection. In the case of respiratory infections, you wouldn't irrigate with peroxide, rather you'd nebulize it. Levy provides all the details on this in his free e-book, "Rapid Virus Recovery," hyperlinked at the beginning of this article.

Nebulizing hydrogen peroxide can also help to address leaky gut by eradicating harmful pathogens there. "When you stop the brand-new oxidative pathogen toxin stress from dumping in, it's incredible how rapidly a leaky gut can heal," Levy says.

Other Strategies to Optimize Your Oral and Physical Health

In addition to regular irrigation with hydrogen peroxide and vitamin C supplementation, get into the habit of scraping your tongue. Your tongue has large amounts of pathogens on it, and manually scraping off the surface gunk will help keep the pathogen count low. Also, Levy recommends seeing a biological dentist for your checkups, someone who uses ozone therapy, so that you can get your tonsils injected with ozone.

"That's the only way to resolve the chronic infection in them," he says. "It's not a big deal. It takes a few seconds, stings a little bit just like a local anesthetic, and then it's all over. And it doesn't require but maybe two or three visits. You just tack them onto whatever else you're doing at the dentist. If you have a dentist who hasn't done it and the dentist wants to email me or talk to me, that's perfectly fine. I'm here to help."

If, like me, you're prone to hard calculus deposits on your teeth, you can use a scale remover to scrape around your teeth along the gum line. According to Levy, the buildup of scale on your teeth typically occurs when there's a slight imbalance in your calcium-

to-phosphorus ratio. Weston A. Price established that you ideally want a calcium-to-phosphorus ratio of 2 1/2-to-1. “Roughly a calcium of 10 and a phosphorus of 4,” Levy says.

Another contributing factor could be infection. When oxidative stress is high, it causes your reverse T3 to elevate, causing a deranged free T3 to reverse T3 ratio.

“All of that not only causes a predilection toward calcium depositing, it also causes the predilection toward focal infections metastasizing and focal cancers metastasizing,” Levy says. “Oxidative stress is primarily regulated by your thyroid function. Your thyroid function has to be perfect. That's one of the things that doctors need to do right along with getting the 3D cone beam exam – make sure your T3 to reverse T3 ratio is perfect.”

To learn more, be sure to download your free copy of [“Hidden Epidemic: Silent Oral Infections Cause Most Heart Attacks and Breast Cancers.”](#) More details on hydrogen peroxide can be found in [“Rapid Virus Recovery,”](#) which is also available as a free download.