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Diabetes and Oral Health

Our bodies convert the food we eat into sugar our bodies use for energy. Diabetes affects your body's ability to process sugar. Both type I and type II cases result in high blood sugar levels, which can harm the mouth, eyes, nerves, kidneys, heart, and other parts of the body.

- **In type I diabetes**, the body does not make enough insulin. Insulin is a hormone that carries sugar from your blood to the cells for energy.
- **In type II diabetes**, the body stops responding to insulin and is unable to keep blood sugar at normal levels.

Overview

- More than 34 million people in the United States have diabetes, with 1 in 5 unaware they have the chronic health condition.
- More than 88 million U.S. adults, over a third, have prediabetes with 4 in 5 unaware that they are pre-diabetic.
- Diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death in the United States.
- Type II accounts for approximately 85% to 90% of all diagnosed cases of diabetes.
- Type I accounts for approximately 5% to 10%.
- In the last 20 years, the number of adults diagnosed with diabetes has more than doubled as the American population has aged and become more overweight or obese.

Symptoms of Untreated Diabetes

- Gum disease
- Dry mouth
- Change in taste
- Burning feeling in mouth
- Fungal infections
- Tooth-related infections
- Slow healing
- Children with diabetes may have teeth that erupt at an earlier age
- Frequent urination
- Weight loss
- Fatigue

How can diabetes harm your teeth and gums?

When diabetes is not controlled, high glucose levels in your saliva help harmful bacteria grow. Sugar feeds the bacteria in your mouth, and when bacteria is combined with food, it creates plaque, a sticky film that can cause tooth decay or cavities. Other types of plaque cause gum disease and bad breath.

- Diabetes is associated with gum disease (periodontal disease). Gum disease can be more severe and take longer to heal if you have diabetes.
- Having gum disease can also make your blood glucose hard to control.
- 1 in 5 cases of tooth loss is linked to diabetes.
- Gum disease may increase the risk of type 2 diabetes.
- Uncontrolled diabetes can also show up as tooth-related abscesses in the mouth.
- Infection in the mouth can be linked to poor insulin regulation

How Your Dentist Can Help You Fight Diabetes

- Regular dental visits, at least twice per year, are important.
- If you wait until you notice a problem, serious damage may have already occurred. Your best defense is to regularly get an exam and check-up to stop a problem before it gets too far.
- Treating gum disease can help improve blood sugar control in patients living with diabetes, decreasing the progression of the disease.
- Treatment of gum disease in people with type II diabetes can lower blood sugar over time.
- Treatment of gum disease can reduce your chance of having other problems from diabetes, such as heart and kidney disease.

Oral Health Action Plan for the Diabetic Patient

- Healthy diet
- Good dental hygiene
- Smoke cessation programs
- Regular dental check-up's

Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/ndep/pdfs/toolkits/working-together/150-healthy-teeth-matter.pdf>

American Dental Association

<https://www.ada.org/en/member-center/oral-health-topics/diabetes>

American Dental Association – Mouth Healthy

<https://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/diabetes-slideshow>

Journal of the American Dental Association

[https://jada.ada.org/article/S0002-8177\(16\)30610-9/pdf](https://jada.ada.org/article/S0002-8177(16)30610-9/pdf)

The National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/diabetes/overview/preventing-problems/gum-disease-dental-problems>