



Healthy People Dental

Diabetes and Oral Health Problems

Is There an Association Between Gum Disease and Diabetes?

For the nearly 30 million Americans who have diabetes, many may be surprised to learn about an unexpected complication associated with this condition. Research shows that there is an increased prevalence of gum disease among those with diabetes, adding serious gum disease to the list of other complications associated with diabetes, such as heart disease, stroke and kidney disease.

Is There a Two-Way Street?

Emerging research also suggests that the relationship between serious gum disease and diabetes is two-way. Not only are people with diabetes more susceptible to serious gum disease, but serious gum disease may have the potential to affect blood glucose control and contribute to the progression of diabetes. Research suggests that people with diabetes are at higher risk for oral health problems, such as gingivitis (an early stage of gum disease) and periodontitis (serious gum disease). People with diabetes are at an increased risk for serious gum disease because they are generally more susceptible to bacterial infection, and have a decreased ability to fight bacteria that invade the gums.

The Surgeon General's Report on Oral Health states that good oral health is integral to general health. So be sure to brush and floss properly and see your dentist for regular checkups.



If I Have Diabetes, am I at Risk for Dental Problems?

If your blood glucose levels are poorly controlled, you are more likely to develop serious gum disease and lose more teeth than non-diabetics. Like all infections, serious gum disease may be a factor in causing blood sugar to rise and may make diabetes harder to control.

Other oral problems associated to diabetes include: thrush, an infection caused by fungus that grows in the mouth, and dry mouth which can cause soreness, ulcers, infections and cavities.

How Can I Help Prevent Dental Problems Associated with Diabetes?

First and foremost, control your blood glucose level. Then, take good care of your teeth and gums, along with regular checkups every six months. To control thrush, a fungal infection, maintain good diabetic control, avoid smoking and, if you wear them, remove and clean dentures daily. Good blood glucose control can also help prevent or relieve dry mouth caused by diabetes.

What Can I Expect at My Checkup? Should I Tell My Dental Professional About My Diabetes?

People with diabetes have special needs and your dentist and hygienist are equipped to meet those needs—with your help. Keep your dentist and hygienist informed of any changes in your condition and any medication you might be taking. Postpone any non-emergency dental procedures if your blood sugar is not in good control.