



# Healthy People Dental

## DIABETES AND ORAL HEALTH

### Is there an association between gum disease and diabetes?

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 of diabetes, such as heart disease, stroke, and kidney disease.

The more severe form of gum disease is called periodontitis. When you reach this stage, your gums begin to pull away from your teeth. Pockets form between your teeth and gums. These fill with germs and pus, and deepen. When this happens, you may need gum surgery to save your teeth. If nothing is done, the infection goes on to destroy the bone around your teeth. The teeth may start to move or get loose. Without treatment, your teeth may fall out or need to be pulled.

### 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.



## STEPS TO TAKE FOR GOOD ORAL HEALTH

### 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.

Source: [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org)