



HealthyPeople • Dental

IT'S NATIONAL DIABETES MONTH

What does that mean for dental health?

People who have been diagnosed with Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes are at risk for increased dental health issues due to blood circulation. Diabetics are at increased risk of periodontal, or gum disease, due to this. Often, diabetics will notice a dry mouth, or increased thirst, often an early warning sign of the disease. When diabetes is not controlled, high glucose levels in your saliva help harmful bacteria grow. These bacteria combine with food to form a soft, sticky film called plaque. Plaque also comes from eating foods that contain sugars or starches. Some types of plaque cause tooth decay or cavities. Other types of plaque cause gum disease and bad breath. Gum disease can be more severe and take longer to heal if you have diabetes. In turn, having gum disease can make your blood glucose hard to control.

Common mouth problems from diabetes according to the National Institute of Health are:

- Gingivitis - sore, bleeding gums
- Periodontitis - gums that have pulled away from the teeth, are sore and bleeding
- Thrush – sore white or sometimes red patches on the cheeks and gums, tongue or roof of your mouth
- Xerostoma (dry mouth) – dry feeling in your mouth often or all of the time, dry rough tongue, pain, cracked lips
- Oral burning – burning feeling in the mouth, dry mouth, bitter taste

If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, schedule a visit with your dentist right away.



ADVICE FROM THE AMERICAN DENTAL ASSOCIATION

The following is a list of advice for both Type 1 and Type 2 diabetics. While they are vastly different diseases, their impact on oral health are the same.

- Visit your dentist for an oral hygiene check and cleaning 3-4 times a year, depending on your gum health
- Floss and brush regularly, preferably after each meal, but definitely 2 times per day. Use fluoridated toothpaste.
- Decrease intake of sugary and refined foods, and keep close watch of your blood glucose levels

- Maintain a healthy weight, and exercise regularly

Foods to help maintain dental health include whole, plant-based foods. Diets rich in fiber from sources like vegetables (as many as you can eat!), fruits, beans, and whole grains have been shown to moderate blood sugars. Diets based in plant-based foods, have been shown to reverse Type 2 diabetes. It's not the carbohydrate you need to fear, but the

simple, refined carbohydrates, stripped of their nutrition. Foods like bread, white sugars, foods made with white flours and white rice (processed foods) are foods that have had their fiber stripped, and are often combined with fats. Additionally, foods high in saturated fats also lead to insulin sensitivity. Fiber helps you to moderate your blood sugar levels, and a low-fat, whole food diet, helps your body to get glucose out of the blood stream.