

DIABETES AND YOUR ORAL HEALTH

Common oral health problems associated with diabetes are:

- tooth decay
- periodontal (gum) disease
- salivary gland dysfunction/dry mouth
- fungal infections
- lichen planus and lichenoid reactions (inflammatory skin disease)
- infection and delayed healing
- taste impairment

Inform your dentist:

- if you have been diagnosed with diabetes
- if the disease is under control
- if there has been any other change in your medical history
- all prescription and over-the-counter drugs you are taking

Connection between diabetes and periodontal disease?

Because diabetes reduces the body's resistance to infection, the gums are among the tissues likely to be affected. Periodontal diseases are infections of the gum and bone that hold your teeth in place.

Periodontal disease is often linked to the control of diabetes. For example, patients with inadequate blood sugar control appear to develop periodontal disease more often and more severely, and they lose more teeth than persons who have good control of their diabetes. It is possible to have periodontal disease and not have all of the warning signs. If you notice any of the warning signs of gum disease, see your dentist immediately.

Because of lowered resistance and a longer healing process, periodontal diseases often appear to be more frequent and more severe among persons with diabetes. That's why good maintenance of blood sugar levels, a well-balanced diet that meets your needs, good oral care at home, regular dental checkups and periodontal examinations are important.

When diabetes is not controlled properly, high glucose levels in saliva may help bacteria thrive. Brushing twice a day with fluoride toothpaste and cleaning once a day between your teeth with floss or an interdental cleaner helps remove plaque.

What else can I do to help prevent oral health problems?

Preventive oral health care, including professional cleanings at the dental office, is important if you are to control the progression of periodontal disease and other oral health problems. Regular dental checkups and periodontal screenings are important for evaluating overall dental health and for treating dental problems in their initial stages. Your dentist may recommend more frequent evaluations and preventive procedures, such as teeth cleaning, to maintain good oral health.