



Diabetes

**Healthy Gums.
Healthy You.**

See your dentist regularly.

Why Discuss Diabetes in a Dental Office?

Gum disease is a leading complication of diabetes. In fact, an estimated one-third of the 24 million Americans with diabetes develop gum disease – a rate three to four times higher than people without diabetes. Left untreated, gum disease can damage the tissues and bone surrounding the teeth and lead to tooth loss.

What is Gum Disease?

Periodontal (gum) disease begins when bacteria in plaque (a sticky biofilm that forms on teeth) produce toxins that irritate the gums. If the plaque is not removed daily through brushing and flossing, gum tissues may break down and become red, tender and likely to bleed. The early stage of periodontal disease (called gingivitis) is treatable and reversible. However, if left untreated, this condition may progress to a more serious condition called chronic periodontitis, a bacterial infection in the pockets around teeth. At this stage the bacteria and resulting tissue inflammation cause a breakdown of the gum tissue and bone, and eventually the teeth may become loose, fall out or need to be removed.

Warning Signs of Gum Disease

Because people with diabetes can have more severe levels of bone loss, it is important to heed the warning signs of gum disease, including:

- Gums that bleed during toothbrushing and flossing
- Red, swollen and tender gums
- Persistent bad breath or unpleasant taste in mouth
- Gums that have receded or pulled away from your teeth
- Loose or separating teeth
- Pus between the tooth and gum
- A change in your bite

The Link to Diabetes

Diabetes is a serious disease in which the body does not produce or properly use insulin, a hormone that is needed to convert food into energy. Keeping the disease under control is critical, and some research suggests that people with diabetes who take care of their gums are better able to control their blood sugar levels. Because diabetics have a higher chance of developing gum disease, it is essential to maintain good oral health and have your dentist provide preventive treatment options.

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What You Can Do

Regular dental visits will help your dentist detect early signs of gum disease and suggest treatment options. Here are some suggestions for regular preventive care:

- Tell your dentist about your type of diabetes, medication(s) you take, whether you are insulin-dependent, and what your baseline sugar level is. This will allow your dentist to determine the best oral treatment plan.
- Brush your teeth twice a day. Also be sure to clean between teeth with floss or other type of interdental cleaner once a day.
- Schedule regular dental checkups. Routine dental visits (twice a year) can detect early signs of gum disease and provide early treatment options. More frequent professional cleanings to remove tartar along the gum line can be very beneficial in treating early forms of gum disease.
- Eat a balanced diet and limit snacks that may contribute to tooth decay and gum disease.
- If you smoke, seek help with quitting. Smoking can make gum problems worse.
- If you are pregnant, pay particular attention to your oral hygiene. Hormonal changes can exaggerate some dental problems.

The Prevention Connection

Put the bite on gum disease. Practice good oral care at home and schedule regular checkups with your dentist.

This Information Provided by

