



Dental

Dental tips

How to care for your mouth when you have diabetes

Did you know that diabetes makes you more likely to get gum disease? What's more, gum disease makes it more difficult for diabetes patients to control their blood sugar. If you have diabetes, you need to be aware of your risk for gum disease. Your dentist may refer to gum disease as "periodontal disease."

Gum disease is an infection of the gum, bones and tissues that attach your teeth to your jaw bone. Gum disease starts with germs called bacteria that cling to your teeth. These germs are part of a sticky film that covers your teeth. This sticky film is called plaque. If the plaque isn't removed daily with brushing and flossing, it hardens into tartar. Tartar collects more plaque. The bacteria in the plaque can infect the gums and lead to gum disease.

How does gum disease affect diabetic patients?

Patients with diabetes are two to four times more likely to develop gum disease. This may be because they get infections more easily. Their gum disease is also more severe. It produces 50% more bone and tooth loss.¹ People with poorly controlled diabetes are especially at risk.

Gum disease makes it more difficult for diabetes patients to control their blood sugar.² That is because it increases inflammation, which can raise blood sugar levels. Treating gum disease will help control your blood sugar.³



In brief:

- Diabetic patients are more likely to develop gum disease
- Gum disease makes it more harder to control their blood sugar levels
- Brushing, flossing and regular dental visits help control gum disease

Common signs of gum disease include:

- Red and swollen gums that bleed when you brush or floss
- Gums that have pulled away from the teeth
- Bad breath
- Permanent teeth that become loose
- Changes in the way your teeth fit together

Tobacco makes these symptoms worse, especially for diabetes patients.

What can be done at home to keep gums and teeth healthy?

- Always brush with a soft toothbrush after eating
- Floss every day
- If you wear dentures, keep them clean
- Have your teeth professionally cleaned at least twice a year
- Let your dentist know about any mouth problems you're experiencing
- If you use tobacco, talk to your doctor about quitting

Keeping your gums healthy will make it easier to control your diabetes. And controlling your diabetes will make it easier to avoid or manage gum disease. It's a win-win approach.

How do you treat gum disease?

In the early stages, your dentist can remove plaque and tartar. If the gum disease is advanced, different treatments may be needed. Since people with diabetes often heal more slowly, they may need special treatments.



1 National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, Periodontal (Gum) Disease: Causes, Symptoms, and Treatments, <http://www.nidcr.nih.gov/OralHealth/Topics/GumDiseases/PeriodontalGumDisease.htm>, NIH Publication No. 11-1142, July 2011, no copyright.

2 American Academy of Periodontology, Gum Disease and Diabetes, <http://www.perio.org/consumer/mbc.diabetes.htm>, last modified: February 23, 2011.

3 American Diabetes Association, Effect of Periodontal Treatment on Glycemic Control of Diabetic Patients, Diabetes Care. 2010 February, 33(2),PMCID: PMC2809296, doi:10.2337/09-1378.

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