

DIABETES AND DENTAL HEALTH

People with diabetes need to take special care of their oral health because diabetes may lower your resistance to gum disease and other mouth infections. As plaque (a sticky film of bacteria, mucus, and food particles) builds up on your teeth, high blood glucose helps these bacteria grow. This may result in serious gum disease and the eventual loss of teeth. In addition, diabetes can cause problems such as dry mouth and increased glucose levels in your saliva, leading to a painful fungal infection (thrush).

Problems may extend beyond your oral health: gum disease may also make it difficult to control your blood sugar. Be aware of your increased risk, and check your teeth and gums thoroughly and frequently for any sign of problems, including:

- sore, swollen gums;
- bleeding gums;
- white patches in your mouth;
- gums pulling away from your teeth;
- dry or sore mouth;
- loose or sensitive teeth;
- bad breath;
- white or yellow pus around gums;
- constant bad taste in your mouth;
- a bite that feels different;
- dentures that don't fit well.

Contact your dentist right away if you experience any of these symptoms. Also, during your regular appointments, talk to your dentist about your diabetes and ask for recommendations on taking care of your oral health.

PREVENTION

- Keep your blood glucose as normal as possible.
- Floss at least once a day.
- Brush your teeth after each meal with a soft toothbrush.

- Keep your dentures clean.
- Don't smoke or use tobacco products.
- Visit the dentist twice a year.
- Don't delay if your dentist identifies a problem and recommends treatment.

You should plan ahead before any dental treatment. Talk to your doctor and your dentist about taking care of your diabetes during your dental work, especially if you are going to have any trouble chewing food. You may need to adjust your normal health routines while your mouth is healing.

