



Dental Guides

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The Link Between Your Oral Health and Diabetes

You might not immediately think of a link between your oral health and diseases like diabetes, but there is one. The American Diabetes Association shows that sub-optimal glucose levels can triple your risk for developing periodontal (gum) disease, an infection of the important gum and bone tissue that support your teeth. High blood sugar is not only bad for your overall body, but, according to the [CDC](#), it weakens white blood cells, the main way your body helps fight infections in the mouth. The inflammation from gum disease is also linked to an increased risk of issues with

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diabetes management or even developing the disease.

Research Shows Links

Medical research continues to point to the relationship between our oral health and what once may have been thought to have been seemingly unrelated conditions, like diabetes. In fact, the “whole body” relationship between your oral health and diabetes is just one of many important links being seen between our mouth, now considered “the gateway to the body,” and our systemic health, as in our entire bodies. Numerous studies continue to link oral health issues like gum disease to serious health issues beyond diabetes, including dementia, cardiovascular and respiratory issues, and more.

Targeting Gum Disease

Taking care of your oral health is very important, and not just to maintain a beautiful smile. Chronic bacterial infection means chronic inflammation that can, if not treated, lead to tooth loss.

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If you have diabetes, you're already at risk of increased cavities, which means that twice-daily brushing, flossing, and regular, professional cleaning by your dental practitioner is imperative. By taking care of your oral health, you may also be helping to gain better control of your blood sugar.

Signs of Gum Disease

Early-stage gum disease may be present even before symptoms show. At that point, gum disease may have already advanced to a stage where it can still be treated but not totally reversed. Signs to watch out for include:

- Gums that feel tender or swollen
- Spitting out blood when brushing or flossing
- Receding gums
- Bad breath
- A bite that seems off
- Loose teeth

You Are What You Eat

Poor nutrition is linked to increased risks of developing both Type 2 diabetes and

The Link
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Your Oral
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gum disease. The same sorts of food that people with diabetes are cautioned to avoid or at least limit, like sugary drinks, refined carbohydrates, dried fruit, and breakfast cereals, are known culprits for gum disease when oral care is lacking. Bacteria love sugar, and simple carbohydrates (think white bread, potato chips, pasta) become simple sugars that increase blood sugar levels and create more sugar in your saliva. Consider trying carbs that are rich in fiber instead.

Remember, if you don't tackle the oral bacteria created by sugars with home oral hygiene and professional cleanings, you will most likely develop cavities and perhaps gum disease and eventual tooth loss. And that's not even considering the systemic health relationship.

Vegetables are always at the top of the "good" list for patients in terms of both oral health and diabetes. Healthy carbohydrates are found in fresh fruits, whole wheat, and grains like quinoa and oats. Other good choices include low- or even no-fat dairy and lean proteins. Keep in mind that drinks that dry out your

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mouth, like alcohol and coffee, reduce saliva output, which is a key defender against bacteria. Chewing sugar-free gum can help. And coffee also can eat away at your protective tooth enamel if you don't clean your teeth.

If you're going to eat candy, consider that treats like hard, chewy candy sticks longer to your teeth. Eating sugary sweets with meals also helps prevent sugar from sticking to your teeth. If you have diabetes, follow your doctor's orders and monitor your blood sugar levels as directed.

Treating Gum Disease

In its earliest stage, called gingivitis, no bone loss has occurred. We can normally reverse this early form of gum disease before it progresses. Professional dental cleanings and twice daily brushing and flossing should see gingivitis reversed. We might suggest you also use antibacterial mouthwash to help kill bacteria and keep your breath fresh. Now's the time to address your oral health before gingivitis develops into

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more severe forms of periodontal disease that may require more costly treatments or even surgical intervention to manage.

If not treated, gum disease can advance to periodontitis, a more serious form of gum disease that, if not treated, will lead to tooth loss. Periodontists utilize numerous non-surgical and surgical periodontal treatments to manage gum disease. Efforts include cleaning deep under the gum line, covering recessed areas, and helping to regenerate new supportive bone and gum tissue. Some of these treatments include:

- Scaling and root planing
- Pocket/flap reduction surgery
- Guided tissue regeneration
- Bone and gum grafting techniques
- Medications (as part of treatment)
- LANAP® regenerative laser treatment

Conclusion

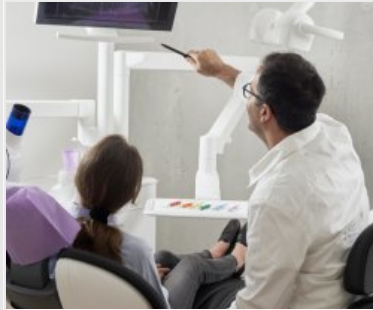
Research shows us that nearly half of all individuals in the U.S. aged 30 and older

have some form of gum disease and that nearly 12% of the population has been diagnosed with diabetes. Taking care of your oral health at home and with regular professional hygiene maintenance visits, as suggested by your dental practitioners, may help you manage both gum disease and help you address diseases like diabetes. As always, if you smoke, try to quit! The Cleveland Clinic reports that smokers are 30-40% more likely to develop Type 2 diabetes. Smoking is also one of the key risk factors in the development of periodontal disease.

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Center for Periodontics and Implant
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