

NOW WHAT: Diabetes and keeping your mouth healthy

If you have diabetes, you're more likely to develop cavities and gum diseases because diabetes can reduce the blood supply to that area. The right diabetes dental care can help your mouth stay healthy. If you have diabetes and are over the age of 50, your risk is even higher.

FACTS FIRST: It's important to keep your mouth healthy with good dental care at home and regular trips to the dentist. Always let your dentist know that you have diabetes and what medicines you take.

Symptoms to Watch For

Oral Health Conditions to Monitor

Prevention

ACT ON THE FACTS:

- **Symptoms to watch for are bleeding or sore gums, getting infections often and bad breath that won't go away.**
- **It is important to monitor oral health conditions like:**
 - o **Gingivitis** – When your gums bleed, turn red and feel sore. Uncontrolled diabetes causes the bacteria in your mouth to produce toxins that inflame your gums. Regular brushing, flossing, and using mouthwash can help reduce the bacterial toxins and minimize the risk of gingivitis.
 - o **Periodontitis** – If gingivitis is untreated, it can become a more severe gum disease that erodes the bone tissue supporting your teeth. In the worst case, it could create tooth loss. Although this can't be reversed, you can prevent getting to this point by brushing and flossing regularly. In severe cases, a specialist called a periodontist should be contacted.
 - o **Dry Mouth** – Both diabetes and older age slow down saliva production. Saliva makes the enzymes that attack bacteria. Dry mouth can lead to cavities, sores, and ulcers.
 - o **Infection** – Bacteria aren't the only organisms that like sugar; so do fungi, which is why a yeast infection called thrush is common in people with diabetes. These white or red patches on your tongue and inside your cheeks can turn into open sores.
 - o **Burning Mouth Syndrome** – The feeling like you just scalded your mouth with a hot drink, or your mouth tingling or feeling numb, may lead to the loss of taste.
 - o **Slow Wound Healing** – Wounds take longer to heal. Uncontrolled diabetes may cause blood to move more slowly, which makes it more difficult for the body to deliver nutrients to wounds.

- **Prevent Problems**

- o Keep your blood sugar in check.
- o Brush and floss at least twice daily, and rinse with an antiseptic mouthwash.
- o Wait for around 30 minutes after eating before brushing to protect any tooth enamel that has been softened by acidic food.
- o If you wear dentures, remove them, and clean them daily. Don't sleep in them.
- o If you smoke, quit.
- o Get a dental checkup every 6 months. Your dentist may recommend that you do so more often.



Which symptoms of an unhealthy mouth are you noticing?



When was your last dental appointment?



When is your next dental appointment?

YOU'RE NOT ALONE!



For more information on how to manage your diabetes, visit:

DIABETESNOWWHAT.ORG