

# Health Awareness

## Diabetes' Hidden Threats To Oral Health

(NAPS)—Most people understand that diabetes, a condition caused when the pancreas does not produce enough insulin, reducing the body's ability to fight infection, can cause a number of health conditions. But many don't know that uncontrolled diabetes can lead to gingivitis (gum disease) and other oral health problems.

That's why it's important to know the effect of diabetes on oral health and the additional benefits dental insurance may be able to provide for maintaining oral health.

Here are some helpful tips to use and negative signs to watch out for.

Although it may seem unrelated, if someone has diabetes, it is important for them to make their dentist aware of their condition. Dentists are able to monitor for signs of diabetes-related oral complications and can even spot signs of diabetes during an exam. These include sore or loose teeth, fungal mouth infections, and mouth ulcers. Diabetes may also decrease saliva in the mouth. Dry mouth increases the risk for tooth decay or infections and is a common cause for cavities.

Someone with diabetes may take longer to heal from these oral issues than someone who does not have the condition. People with gum disease have nearly double the risk for heart disease as those with healthy gums, according to the American Academy of Periodontology, and may have a harder time managing diabetes.

### How to prevent gum disease

"Individuals with diabetes are more susceptible to infections, putting them at an increased risk of developing gum disease," said Dr. Gregory Theis, DDS. "Diabetics with gum disease who receive frequent dental cleanings actually have lower glucose levels than diabetics who do not."

According to Dr. Theis, gum disease is preventable by:

- Proper brushing twice daily, using fluoride toothpaste
- Proper flossing once a day
- Visiting the dentist regularly

People with this condition can also be proactive about their oral health by:

**Watching for gum disease.** Signs include red and swollen gums, or gums



**People with diabetes should be aware of their dental health.**

that bleed easily. Other signs include halitosis (bad breath), dry mouth, loose teeth, or pain in the mouth.

**Keeping blood sugar under control.** For people with diabetes, this is not only vital to maintaining overall health, but also crucial to preventing a number of issues in the mouth. Increased glucose is beneficial to bacteria and fosters its growth.

### Resources available to people with diabetes

According to the National Association of Dental Plans, those without dental insurance are 29% more likely to have diabetes.

For example, Delta Dental of Wisconsin offers additional benefits for members with diabetes. These include being eligible for two additional exams and cleanings per year. Their website also has helpful tips for how to maintain good oral health along with managing diabetes. Visiting the dentist frequently will help catch any issues early and help to maintain a healthy smile.

Some studies have shown that people with diabetes who receive regular oral healthcare may even lower their overall medical costs from diabetes.

Though diabetes can cause a number of health issues, people with the condition can maintain their oral health by practicing good oral hygiene, visiting their dentist for regular exams, and watching their mouth for signs of issues such as gum disease. Having the resources to recognize the signs of poor oral health caused by diabetes can help prevent further complications.

### Learn More

For further facts and advice, visit [www.dentadentalwi.com](http://www.dentadentalwi.com).