

DENTAL HEALTH NEWS FROM THE NIH

Diabetes: Tips For A Healthy Mouth

(NAPSA)—If you have diabetes, you are at risk for developing mouth problems, especially periodontal (gum) disease, say dental researchers at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). But the good news is that controlling your blood glucose can help protect you from periodontal disease. In fact, research shows that if your diabetes is well controlled, you are at no more risk of developing gum disease than people without diabetes, the NIH dental experts say.

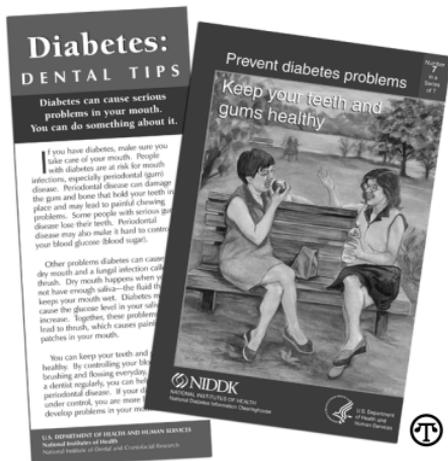
Why does diabetes put me at risk for periodontal disease?

Diabetes makes you more susceptible to infection, including infections in your mouth such as periodontal disease. Periodontal disease starts when plaque—a sticky film of bacteria (germs) that is constantly forming on teeth—builds up along and under the gum line. If plaque is not removed, gum disease can progress and eventually destroy the bones, gums and tissue that support the teeth. This may lead to chewing problems that could make it difficult for you to follow your recommended diet. Your teeth might also eventually become loose and have to be removed.

What other mouth problems can diabetes cause?

A common problem is dry mouth—not having enough saliva, or spit, to keep your mouth wet. Saliva helps protect teeth from decay; without enough saliva, you may be more likely to develop dental decay.

Additionally, dry mouth combined with a higher glucose level in your saliva could lead to a fungal infection called thrush.



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Thrush can cause painful, white patches in the mouth.

Tips for a healthy mouth:

- Keep your blood glucose as close to normal as possible. Good glucose control can help prevent mouth problems.
- Brush your teeth after eating, when possible. But be sure to brush thoroughly at least twice daily. Use toothpaste with fluoride in it and any other special fluoride rinses or toothpastes your dentist recommends.
- Floss your teeth at least once a day to help prevent plaque buildup.
- Keep your dentures clean.
- Tell your dentist you have diabetes and visit him or her regularly for cleanings.
- Call your dentist right away if you have red, sore or bleeding gums; a sore tooth; or soreness from your dentures.
- If you smoke, quit. Smoking can make gum disease worse.