

# Diabetes and Oral Health



People with diabetes have a higher risk of gum disease, tooth decay, and other oral diseases. These conditions can be uncomfortable and impact the individual's quality of life. With preventive oral health care these conditions can be managed and prevented.

This fact sheet will help you understand why good oral is important for people with diabetes.

Untreated gum disease can lead to tooth loss. People with diabetes are at higher risk of having more missing teeth than people without diabetes. Tooth loss can affect your ability to chew, speak or smile, and may affect your confidence.

Diabetes can also cause a dry mouth. A dry mouth is uncomfortable and can increase your risk of tooth decay. When combined with higher levels of sugar or carbohydrates, a dry mouth increases the risk for oral thrush, burning mouth syndrome and other oral lesions.

## How can Diabetes affect your Oral Health?

Diabetes comes with several complications. Some are related to your oral health. Periodontal disease or gum disease is one of the common complication of diabetes. Inflamed gums (bleeding gums) can result in damage to the supporting bone structures around your teeth.

Gum disease can interfere with the ability to maintain stable blood glucose levels. Variations in blood glucose levels can also make you more susceptible to gum disease. If you have diabetes it is important to manage your oral health and prevent or treat gum disease to better control your diabetes.

## Symptoms of Oral Disease

The symptoms of gum disease can include:



Bleeding and/ or tender gums



Bad breath/ halitosis



Receding gums



Loose teeth

## Oral Lesions

Oral lesions may appear as red or white patches in your mouth. Oral lesions can have different causes i.e. a burn due to hot food, biting your lip, or trauma caused by slipping with a toothbrush or fork.

If an oral lesion doesn't go away within two weeks you must seek advice from an oral health professional.



Ulcer on the inside of the lip



Lesion on the side of tongue

Ulcers that don't heal within two weeks need to be reviewed by an oral health professional.

## Steps to take care of your Oral Health

Most oral health problems can be prevented and managed by good oral hygiene habits and paying attention to what you eat and drink.

The way to achieve good oral health is different for everyone. The general advice is to brush your teeth twice a day with a fluoridated toothpaste. It is important to clean between your teeth daily. The tools you use depend on your mouth and personal preferences. An oral health professional can help you find out what works for you.

Diet and oral hygiene habits are even more important when you experience a dry mouth. An oral health professional can give you advice on how to manage a dry mouth and provide tips that may help.

It is important to maintain regular visits to your oral health professional to make sure you stay on track.



### Brush twice a day

To remove food and soft plaque from your teeth.



### Use a fluoridated toothpaste

Fluoride toothpaste helps to protect your teeth and reduce your risk of dental decay.



### Clean in between your teeth

Floss or interdental aids are important to remove food and plaque caught between teeth.



### Be mindful of your diet

Discuss with an oral health professional ways to reduce the impacts of diet on your teeth.



### Maintain regular dental visits

Regular visits to your oral health professional can identify and prevent future problems.

## References

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