



Diabetes and oral health

Managing your blood glucose levels is the key to a healthy mouth. If you are living with diabetes and your blood glucose (sugar) levels are above your target ranges (high blood glucose levels) then you have an increased risk of problems in your mouth, such as infections, reduced blood supply to the gums and dry mouth.

High blood glucose levels increase the risk of the following:

Gum diseases (Gingivitis & Periodontitis)

Gum disease occurs when bacteria in the mouth forms into a sticky plaque which sits on the surfaces of teeth next to the gums. If the plaque is not removed by regular daily brushing the gums can become infected.

Gingivitis - early gum disease

- Signs of gingivitis are redness, swelling and bleeding (especially when brushing) of the gums.
- Good news, this can be reversed with regular toothbrushing. If bleeding persists, contact a dental practitioner.

Periodontitis - advanced gum disease

- Can be rapid and painless - damaging gums and supporting bone resulting in teeth loosening.
- Signs of periodontitis include
 - Red, swollen and/or tender gums.
 - Bad breath.
 - Gaps forming between teeth.
 - Bad taste in the mouth.
 - Loose teeth.
 - Receding gums (gum line shrinks away from the tooth making it look longer).
- Periodontitis can cause blood glucose levels to rise, which in turn can make managing your diabetes more difficult.



HEALTHY GUM

GINGIVITIS

PERIODONTITIS

Tooth decay

- High glucose levels in saliva and dry mouth can lead to more plaque (bacteria) on the teeth.
- Plaque (bacteria) can feed on the glucose (sugars) and produce acids that can damage the surface of the tooth, leading to tooth decay.

Fungal infection e.g. thrush

- Can cause discomfort, including pain and itchiness, and appears as white or red patches in the mouth.

How to keep your mouth healthy and help with managing your diabetes

- Gently brush teeth, tongue and gums twice a day using a soft toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste.
- Spit and don't rinse your mouth after brushing. Fluoride in toothpaste strengthens and protects teeth. Replace your toothbrush every three months.
- Gently clean between your teeth with floss/interdental brush every day.
- Avoid a dry mouth by drinking plenty of water or chew sugar-free gum.
- Don't smoke as it increases risk of gum disease. Seek help to quit. Quit line 137848.
- Maintain a healthy diet.
- Regularly attend your dental practitioner and inform them about your diabetes.
- Regularly attend your general medical practitioner to manage your diabetes.

If you wear dentures make sure they fit well and...

- Keep gums clean by gently brushing gums once a day.
- Brush dentures with a soft brush, soap and cold water then rinse well.
- Remove dentures at night and store in a clean, dry environment as this reduces the risk of bacterial and fungal growth on the denture.

Follow these tips to have a healthy mouth and help manage diabetes

For further information please discuss with your dental practitioner

Would you like more information or to provide feedback?

This document can be made available in alternative formats such as braille, audio tape or electronically on request.



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