

# The Dental and Diabetes CONNECTION

**Dental cavities and gum diseases are bacterial infections. Any infection, including dental, can make it more difficult to manage diabetes and increases risk for heart, eye, kidney, and other serious complications.**

**Diabetes can increase the risk for dental problems**, especially periodontal (gum) diseases. This can cause teeth to become loose as the bone to which teeth attach becomes damaged.

## Dry Mouth

High blood sugar can cause a dry mouth. It is a relatively common problem for people with diabetes.

Because saliva helps protect against cavities and gum disease, a “dry mouth” can increase the risk of developing those problems. It can also contribute to thrush, an infection in the mouth caused by a fungus.

## How to Prevent Dental Infections

» **Excellent oral hygiene.** The bacteria can only do dental damage if they stay on the teeth. Daily oral hygiene may not seem important when there are so many other things to do to control diabetes. But removing bacteria from your teeth with good daily oral hygiene is necessary for preventing cavities, gum disease, and the complications they can create. In the battle to control diabetes, a toothbrush and dental floss are useful weapons.

## How to Prevent Dental Infections *(continued)*

- » **Regular dental exams and cleanings.** Cavities and gum infections may not be noticeable at first, but dentists are able to identify them early and treat them before they become a problem. Having your teeth cleaned regularly is especially important if you develop tartar---the hard, sandy, gritty stuff that can form on teeth. It contributes to periodontal disease by irritating and inflaming the gums. Tartar (calculus) can't be brushed off, but must be scrapped away by a dentist or hygienist.
- » **Eliminate Dry Mouth.** Relieve dry mouth by sucking on sugarless candy, chewing sugarless gum, or using an "artificial saliva" product.

## Make daily oral hygiene easier and effective

- » **Be thorough.** Dental decay and gum diseases are caused by bacteria that stick to teeth. After being removed by brushing and flossing, the bacteria soon begin to reattach so thorough oral hygiene is needed daily. Brushing can remove the bacteria from three surfaces (cheek, biting, and tongue sides), and you can use floss or a floss substitute such as Opal Pix for the two side surfaces.
- » **Pay particular attention to the back (tongue) surface of lower front teeth, and the outside (cheek) surface of upper back teeth.** Those are areas where tartar generally forms if bacterial plaque is not removed daily.
- » **Use fluoridated toothpaste** that also has antibacterial ingredients, such as peroxide with baking soda. Fluoride helps protect teeth from developing cavities, and the antibacterial ingredients kill bacteria not removed with brushing and flossing. Ask your dentist if a fluoride and/or an antimicrobial mouth rinse would be helpful.
- » **Denture Care.** The area beneath full and partial dentures can become irritated and inflamed if the appliances are not removed, cleaned, and soaked overnight. Diabetes can make it more difficult for those sores to heal.

## YOUR FEEDBACK IS IMPORTANT

Please type in this website and take a quick 2-3 minute survey to help us improve our communications about this important topic.



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