

Diabetes and Oral Health

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Diabetes can impact your oral health in ways we may not have even realised!
This article outlines how diabetes impacts your oral health and what you can do about it.

What is Diabetes?

Diabetes is a chronic condition affecting the way the human body converts sugars from food into energy via the hormone insulin. There are several forms of diabetes; however, Type 1 and 2 diabetes occur more commonly, with Type 2 being the most prevalent form. In people with diabetes, insulin is either no longer produced, is not produced correctly, or the amount produced is insufficient.

It is important to understand that diabetes can have detrimental effects on our oral health. This is due to the increased risk of developing infections, including periodontal diseases. Diabetes can lower your resistance to infection and can slow the healing process. If you have been diagnosed with diabetes, you may know that the disease can cause problems with your eyes, nerves, kidneys, heart and other parts of your body. In addition, a person with diabetes is TWICE as likely to have gum and bone disease as people without. In fact, Periodontal disease is often considered the sixth complication of diabetes, and those people who don't have their diabetes under control are especially at risk.

To make matters worse, there is a converse effect. Gingivitis (the mildest form of periodontal disease), if left untreated and uncontrolled, progresses to



The most common oral health problems associated with diabetes are:

- tooth decay
- periodontal (gum) disease
- salivary gland dysfunction
- fungal infections
- lichen planus (a skin disorder that produces lesions in the mouth)
- infection and delayed healing
- taste impairment.

Periodontitis—which can involve chronic infection, tooth loss and bone loss, as well as make it virtually impossible to control an individual's blood sugar levels.

What is the relationship between periodontal disease and diabetes?

For years we've known that people with diabetes are more likely to have periodontal disease than people without diabetes. Recently, research has emerged suggesting that the relationship goes both ways—periodontal disease may make it more difficult for people who have diabetes to control their blood sugar. Though more research is needed, what we do know is that severe periodontal disease can increase blood sugar, putting diabetics at increased risk of complications.