



Your dentist can help diagnose diabetes

Because the symptoms of diabetes may be subtle, many people with this disease aren't aware they have it. About a third of people with diabetes have not been diagnosed, or even been tested for, the disease.¹

Diabetes is a chronic health condition that influences how the body converts sugar into energy. As a result, diabetes that isn't properly managed can lead to higher levels of sugar in the blood — which means higher levels of sugar in saliva, too.

More sugar in a person's saliva is harmful because it will feed decay-causing mouth bacteria and increase the risk of cavities. Also, left unaddressed, the plaque will harden into tartar, which may lead to gum disease, tooth loss or other oral health problems.²

For people with diabetes, this can create a dangerous cycle:

- Diabetes may make someone more likely to develop gum disease.
- Inflammation of the gums due to gum disease may also cause blood sugar to rise, making it more difficult to manage diabetes.³



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**UNTREATED
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**GUM DISEASE MAY
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Your dentist can help diagnose diabetes (continued)



RECOGNIZING GUM DISEASE

Whether you have diabetes or not, you should see your dentist regularly — and as soon as possible if you notice symptoms of gum disease, such as:

- Bad breath that won't go away
- Tender, red, or swollen gums
- Gums that bleed easily³

BEYOND GUM DISEASE: OTHER AREAS OF INCREASED RISK

Gum disease is a common issue to watch for, but diabetes can also make someone more likely to develop other oral health conditions.

- **Dry mouth:** Reduced saliva, or dry mouth, is a side effect of unmanaged diabetes. This can lead to bad breath, sore gums, and, potentially, infections and tooth decay.
- **Thrush:** People with diabetes have a lower resistance to infection. The combination of this low resistance, increased sugar in the saliva, and dry mouth can encourage thrush, a fungal infection identified by white lesions on your tongue and inner cheeks.
- **Slower recovery:** Diabetes weakens white blood cells that fight infections in the mouth, which can cause any oral health issue to heal more slowly and make gum disease more severe.

People with diabetes who have good control of their blood sugar are less apt to develop these problems, but it's always important to maintain your consistent oral health habits.³

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Maintaining a good oral health routine can help prevent bigger problems down the road. Brushing with gentle pressure for at least two minutes, twice a day and flossing once per day is part of establishing good oral health habits. In addition to good habits at home, visiting the dentist for regular checkups may help catch problems early.

For daily diabetes care, follow your physician's advice, which may be tailored for you and your specific health needs.

Delta Dental offers additional dental benefits for members with certain health conditions, including diabetes, pregnancy and certain cancer treatments, through our *Healthy Smile, Healthy You*[®] program. To find out if your plan includes *Healthy Smile, Healthy You*, contact your human resources department.

Taking proactive steps in your oral health may significantly contribute to your overall well-being. Be sure to talk to your dentist about your oral health and discuss any medical conditions that you may have.

¹"Diabetes Basics," www.cdc.gov/diabetes/about/index.html. Accessed November 2024. ²Akcali A., Lang N.P. Dental calculus: The calcified biofilm and its role in disease development. *Periodontol 2000*. 2018;76:109-115. doi: 10.1111/prd.12151. ³"Shield your smile from diabetes-related risk," www.deltadental.com/us/en/protect-my-smile/overall-health/diabetes/do-you-know-what-diabetes-can-do-to-your-teeth.html. Accessed August 2024.