



Diabetes and Oral Health

How does diabetes impact my oral health?

People with diabetes are at increased risk for several problems in their mouth including:

- periodontal disease (gum disease and bone loss)
- bacterial and fungal infections
- dry mouth
- oral ulcerations
- burning mouth
- pain
- poor healing

These conditions may be more severe in people who have higher blood sugar and poorly controlled diabetes.

How does my oral health impact my diabetes?

Poor oral health and infections in your mouth may make it more difficult for you to control your blood sugar.

How do I reduce my risk of oral health problems and keep my mouth healthy?

1. Maintain good control of your blood sugar
 - a. Eat a healthy diet rich in fruits and vegetables. Avoid sugary foods and beverages which may make blood sugar more difficult to control and increase your risk for dental cavities.
 - b. Get daily movement and intentional exercise several times per week
 - c. Work with your doctor to make sure your diabetes medications are working for you
2. Keep your mouth clean
 - a. Brush your teeth with a soft toothbrush for two minutes at least twice per day

- b. Floss at least once per day. Flossing daily helps to reduce the amount of bacteria that hide between your teeth where the toothbrush cannot reach. This bacteria may lead to inflammation and a higher risk for gum disease as well as cavities between your teeth.
 - c. Brush your tongue with your toothbrush or tongue scraper 1-2 times per day. Bacteria live on the tongue which may cause bad breath, poor taste, a coating on your tongue, and increased risk for bacterial and fungal infections.
3. See your dentist regularly. You may need to see your dentist and have a cleaning more than twice per year. By investing more to prevent problems and keeping your mouth healthy, you will save a lot more in the long run!
4. Let your dentist know if any concerns in your mouth arise **as soon as possible!**

How should I prepare for a dental appointment?

1. Try to schedule your appointments in the morning
2. Make sure to eat breakfast and take your diabetes medications prior to your appointment. **Take your medication with food** to lower the risk for hypoglycemia which is a serious condition that results when blood sugars are dangerously low.
Watch for signs of hypoglycemia: Initially, you may start to sweat, feel nervous, feel weak and/or feel hungry. If you suspect hypoglycemia, consume a simple sugar (ie sugar packet, juice, cola) immediately. Untreated hypoglycemia may lead to loss of consciousness, coma, or even death.
3. Make sure your dentist has a way to test your blood sugar prior to the appointment or bring your own glucose meter. Make sure you and/or your dentist have a snack on hand for you in case your blood sugar gets low.
4. Tell your dentist if you have had any changes regarding your medications or diabetes-related complications.

What should I do after dental treatment?

1. For routine care, no special alterations are necessary.
2. If you had a big procedure which changes the way you can eat, your dentist and you may need to work with your physician (medical doctor) to see if you need to modify your diabetes medications while healing.
3. If you had treatment for an infection or a big surgery, your dentist may prescribe you antibiotics. Take the antibiotics as prescribed until gone. Contact your dentist if you have any problems taking the antibiotics.
4. Diabetes may increase your risk for infections both before and after your dental procedure. Contact your dentist immediately if you have any of the following:
 - a. Changes in your mouth or face such as increased pain, swelling, redness, or drainage.
 - b. Signs of an infection, such as fever, sweating, or chills.

Where can I learn more?

1. Short handout: *Diabetes- Understanding the basics*. Access at: <http://www.med.umich.edu/1libr/MEND/Diabetes-Basics.pdf>
2. Patient Education resources Michigan Medicine clinicians recommend: <http://careguides.med.umich.edu/diabetes>
3. Diabetes information guide: <http://www.med.umich.edu/cvc/pdf/resourcecenter/Diabetes.pdf>

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