

Diabetes & Oral Health



Several research studies have shown that the risks of oral health problems are higher in people with diabetes.

Tips to avoid oral health problems :



Maintain blood glucose levels



Control plaque formation in teeth by brushing and flossing properly



Ensure regular visits to dentist for oral checkups. Dentists can tell when and how often such check-ups are necessary

Having diabetes increases the risks of the following oral health problems:

Gingivitis- an early stage of gum disease

Periodontitis - serious disease of gums

Thrush- a type of fungal infection in the mouth

Dry mouth- which can lead to soreness, ulcers, infections, and cavities

Gingivitis

This is the early stage of gum disease in which you have irritation, swelling, and bleeding in your gums. If left untreated it can lead to a serious disease of gums called as periodontitis. When you have gum diseases, the germs in the mouth damage the gums (gingiva) and bones around your teeth. This starts with the formation of plaque, which is a sticky layer of food, saliva, and germs around the teeth. When this plaque and tartar remains in your mouth, even gentle brushing causes your gums to bleed. This is called as gingivitis.





Periodontitis

When you fail to keep your blood sugar levels in control, there are high chances that you might develop serious gum disease. This occurs as you are more prone to infections and it becomes difficult to fight the bacteria in your gums.

If you do not take care of your gums, then, the infection can increase and the bone around your teeth can get damaged. As a result, your teeth become loose and they start shaking. In such a situation, the teeth may fall on its own or sometimes they need to be pulled out. You may also require surgery to save your teeth.

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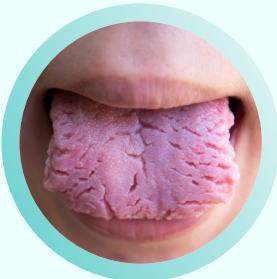
Dry Mouth



Many of us have experienced dry mouth at some time. Very often, it may arise due to medications or high blood sugar levels. Since, there is low quantity of saliva in mouth, the germs and the acids which they produce are not washed away properly. This results in an increased risk of cavities and may also lead to infections of the salivary gland.

Try drinking more of sugar-free fluids, chewing sugar-free gum, or eating sugar-free candy to keep the saliva flowing which reduces the dry mouth condition. Certain saliva-substitutes can also be used which are available at medical stores. You can also prevent and relieve dry mouth that occurs due to diabetes by maintaining good glucose control.

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Thrush

Thrush is also a common oral problem seen in diabetics which occurs due to a fungal infection in the mouth. It can be easily controlled by maintaining good blood glucose levels and by avoiding smoking. In case of using dentures, they should be removed and cleaned daily.



How can I know if I am having oral problems?

Keep an eye out for these signs and symptoms even if you do not feel any pain in your mouth:

- ↗ If your gums bleed during brushing or flossing. Bleeding gums are not normal, even if they do not hurt. Get them checked immediately.
- ↗ If your gums feel red, swollen or tender.
- ↗ If your gums are pulling away from the teeth. You can see the roots of your teeth or they may appear longer.
- ↗ If you are able to see pus between the teeth and gums when you press on the gums.
- ↗ If you have bad breath.
- ↗ If your teeth get loose or you can see increased gaps between them.
- ↗ If you feel that the teeth are not fitting properly when you bite into something.
- ↗ If there are changes in the fittings of partial dentures or bridges.

Is it necessary to tell the dentist about my diabetes?

A diabetic needs special attention, and the dentists are well aware of these requirements. So, it is very important that you inform your dentist about your condition or any changes in medications that you are taking. It is suggested to delay any non-emergency dental procedures if your blood sugar levels are not in control.