Diabetes Testing at the Dentist’s Office

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Should you get tested for diabetes at the dentist’s office?

Periodontitis, a chronic gum infection characterized by swollen, tender or receding gums, can be an early warning sign of Type 2 diabetes, and dental offices could be an ideal place to screen for it, said Wijnand J. Teeuw, the first author of a new study of 313 middle-aged patients who visited a dental clinic in Amsterdam.

Researchers checked them for periodontitis and also tested their blood sugar with a finger-stick blood test. Among the group were 126 patients with mild or moderate periodontitis, 78 patients with severe periodontitis and 109 with healthy gums.

Nearly half of the patients with any degree of periodontitis had blood sugar tests indicating they had pre-diabetes, a condition that can progress to full-blown diabetes. Among those with mild to moderate gum disease who had never been given diabetes diagnoses, nearly 10 percent appeared to have Type 2 diabetes, while among those with the most severe gum disease who had never been given diabetes diagnoses, 18 percent had results indicating they had the full-blown disease.

Among patients whose gums were healthy, 8.5 percent appeared to have diabetes, and over a third had pre-diabetes.

A simple finger stick analysis “can help with early diabetes screening,” Dr. Teeuw said. The [study was in BMJ Open Diabetes Research & Care](http://press.psprings.co.uk/drc/february/drc000326.pdf).