

## Diabetes and Your Teeth

By Lynn Yoffee

Medically reviewed by Pat F. Bass III, MD, MPH



### Related Articles

- [Understanding Periodontitis : A Progressive Form Of Gum Disease](#)
- [Gum Disease Causes, Symptoms And Treatment](#)
- [Gum Disease : An All-Too-Common Problem](#)

### Drugs

- [Prevident](#)
- [Detrol](#)
- [Pegintron](#)

**Diabetes** can cause a variety of other health problems, ranging from cardiovascular disease to **nerve damage**. Many people with diabetes don't know that they are also susceptible to gum disease that, if left untreated, can lead to a loss of teeth. What's more, advanced gum disease can also cause diabetes to progress due to its negative effect on your blood glucose control.

### Diabetes and Dental Problems

Diabetes increases your risk of developing dental issues, specifically early gum disease, known as gingivitis, and advanced gum disease, called periodontitis. Poor control of blood glucose levels means that your body isn't able to fight off bacteria that invade your gums, causing infections that can lead to the loss of teeth. Another oral problem caused by diabetes is dry mouth, which sounds like a minor issue, but can lead to cavities.

Because of this relationship between diabetes and your teeth, it's important to tell your dental hygienist and your dentist that you have diabetes and about any medications you take. If you find that your **blood sugar** is out of control when it's time for a dental appointment, postpone the visit unless it's an emergency.

### Signs of Gum Disease

Be aware of the symptoms of gum disease — signals that your teeth are in danger:

- Gums bleed, especially when you floss or brush.
- Pus oozes from your gums or between your teeth.
- Gums are swollen, red, or tender.

- There is a change in how your teeth fit together; bridges and partial dentures don't seem to fit correctly.
- You seem to have bad breath all of the time.
- Your gums appear to have pulled away from your teeth or your teeth look longer.
- Your teeth become loose.

If you experience any of these symptoms, make an appointment to see your dentist.

## How to Avoid Dental Problems

The first and most important step to prevent problems with your teeth and gums is to maintain your target blood glucose level consistently. Next, take these steps:

- Brush after every time you eat, using a soft toothbrush. Be sure to gently brush your gum line, too.
- Don't delay dental work if needed.
- Floss every day to avoid a buildup of plaque, which solidifies and grows under your gums to cause infections.
- Have a dental check-up and cleaning at least twice a year.
- If you have partial dentures, be sure to clean them daily.
- If you notice any problem with your teeth or gums, make a dentist appointment immediately.
- If you smoke, quit.

Finally, it's important for those with diabetes to plan carefully for dental work. Talk with both your doctor and dentist before a visit because they might adjust your medicine. If you need dental work, you may have difficulty eating afterwards and you should seek guidance on changing your medications, how often to **check your blood glucose**, and what to eat and drink.

With good planning, you can maintain a healthy mouth while at the same time managing your diabetes to keep your blood sugar level on target.

Source: <http://www.everydayhealth.com/diabetes/teeth-matter-too.aspx>