



ASSURE® BRILLIANCE

COMPREHENSIVE SERVICE & SUPPORT PROGRAM

Diabetes and Oral Health

With approximately 30 million Americans having Type 2 diabetes, it is important to understand the relationship that the disease has on a person's overall health and well-being, including oral health. Research indicates that people with diabetes have a higher risk for developing gum disease than individuals who do not have diabetes.

Gum disease progresses over time from gingivitis (early disease stage) to periodontitis (late stage). An estimated 95 percent of Americans with diabetes have some form of periodontal disease. In addition, research shows a synergistic effect between diabetes and oral health, with periodontal disease contributing to difficulty controlling blood glucose levels. The instability in glucose levels can lead to gum disease and other oral health problems, including dry mouth. Dry mouth can cause decreased saliva, which in turn raises the risk for mouth ulcers, pain, infection and dental caries.

Another side effect of glucose instability is blood vessel thickening. When this occurs, nutrients can be blocked from reaching the body. The blockage can also deter the removal of waste products from the body's tissues. Poor healing of oral tissues can also occur from impaired blood flow after a post-oral procedure or surgery.

Thrush and Diabetes

Persons who have diabetes are at a greater risk—than the non-diabetic population—of developing thrush, a fungal infection that can occur from taking antibiotics. Thrush causes white patches to appear in the oral cavity and/or on the tongue. In some individuals, thrush creates a burning sensation in the mouth or on the tongue. People with diabetes who smoke are approximately 20 times more likely than non-smokers who have diabetes to develop thrush or periodontal disease. Smoking also interferes with blood flow to the gums thus restricts wound healing of the oral tissues.

Prevention



To support and maintain good oral health—especially in individuals with diabetes—prevention is critical. In an effort to attain optimal oral health, follow the guidelines below.

- Manage blood glucose levels.
- Avoid smoking.
- Brush teeth twice daily with a soft-bristled toothbrush and with fluoride toothpaste. An electric toothbrush may be considered for persons who have difficulty brushing due to medical conditions such as arthritis.
- Floss a least of once a day to remove plaque between teeth and under the gum line.

- Use antibacterial mouth rinses, which can help to reduce bacteria thereby decreasing the risk for plaque and gum disease.
- Schedule dental appointments every six months.
- [For persons with dentures] remove and clean dentures daily.
- Monitor for signs of gum disease including redness, swelling or bleeding of the gums and report these findings to the dentist. Also alert the dentist of dry mouth, dental pain/sensitivity or loose teeth.

Be sure to alert the dentist and dental hygienist when a person has diabetes. It is also helpful to provide them with what medications the person is taking and how well their diabetes is under control. This is especially important prior to any dental procedure or surgery.

References

Dental Care and Diabetes. WebMD website. <http://www.webmd.com/diabetes/dental-health-dental-care-diabetes>. Accessed January 9, 2015.

Diabetes and Dental Care: Guide to Healthy Mouth. Mayo Clinic. <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/diabetes/in-depth/diabetes/ART-20043848>. Accessed January 9, 2015.

Diabetes and Oral Health Problems. American Diabetes Association website. <http://www.diabetes.org/living-with-diabetes/treatment-and-care/oral-health-and-hygiene/diabetes-and-oral-health.html>. Accessed January 9, 2015.

Oral Health-Total Health: Know the Connection. American Dental Hygienists' Association. http://www.adha.org/resources-docs/7228_Oral_Health_Total.pdf. Accessed January 9, 2015.

Prevent Diabetes Problems: Keep Your Mouth Healthy. National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse (NDIC). http://www.diabetes.niddk.nih.gov/dm/pubs/complications_teeth/index.aspx. Accessed January 9, 2015.

Preventive Oral Health Measures for Diabetes. All About Diabetes website. <http://www.allaboutdiabetes.net/preventive-oral-health-measures-for-diabetes/>. Accessed January 20, 2015.