

Diabetes and Oral & Dental Health

Introduction:

Diabetes affects all parts of the body, including mouth and teeth. Studies have shown that people with diabetes are at an increased risk of developing gum disease. Incidence rates of gum disease among diabetics have increased significantly. For this reason, oral and dental diseases are now classified as a serious complication of diabetes (such as retinopathy, nephropathy, neuropathy, etc.) Severe gingivitis can lead to high blood sugar levels just like any other infection, which in turn makes managing diabetes more difficult.

At the same time, treating gum disease can make it easier to control blood sugar levels.

The Effect of Diabetes on Oral and Dental Health:

People with diabetes are at an increased risk for serious gum disease because they are generally more susceptible to bacterial infection and have a decreased ability to fight bacteria that invade the gums.

The higher your blood sugar level, the higher your risk of:

- **Tooth decay (cavities):** High sugar levels in the saliva increase the risk of tooth decay.
- **Gingivitis:** When left untreated, it can develop from simple inflammation to a severe one that may result in tooth loss.

Other Oral Problems Caused by Diabetes:

- **Oral thrush:** A fungal infection that affects mouth tissue.
- **Dry mouth,** which may cause some pain or mouth ulcers. It can also lead to tooth decay, difficulty in speaking and chewing, and serious fungal infections.
- **Weakened sense of taste.**

- **Delayed wound healing after tooth extraction.**

General Guidelines for Maintaining Oral and Dental Health in Diabetes Patients:

- Manage your blood sugar levels (this is the most important factor).
- Brush your teeth with toothpaste at least twice a day and floss at least once a day.
- Avoid all forms of smoking.
- Prevent dry mouth caused by diabetes by managing your sugar intake, drinking water regularly, and using sugar-free chewing gum, or by using medications that help increase moisture in the mouth.
- Schedule regular dental visits at least once every 6 months.
- It is important to tell your dentist if you have diabetes.
- Make sure to clean your dentures daily.
- It is important to know the symptoms of certain dental problems (such as gingivitis) so that they can be treated early.

Instructions for Dental Visits:

- It is preferable to schedule your appointments in the morning, when cortisol levels are high. This reduces the possibility of low blood sugar (cortisol is a hormone secreted by the adrenal gland and it helps raise blood sugar levels).
- Avoid exertion and fatigue before a dental visit.
- Diabetes patients who take insulin are advised to avoid scheduling a dental visit during peak insulin action times to avoid low blood sugar episodes.
- The dentist may postpone a surgical procedure if blood sugar levels are not stable enough, unless it's an emergency.
- It is important for the patient to maintain mealtimes and to take their medications on time.

- If the dental procedure requires the patient to abstain from eating for a certain period of time after it, then the patient must consult their diabetes doctor in advance to adjust the medication dosage and mealtime.
- If you experience symptoms of low blood sugar (confusion / shakiness/ sweating / rapid heartbeat, etc.) during a dental procedure, inform your dentist immediately.
- Patients with well-controlled diabetes can undergo most of the dental procedures available as successfully as healthy individuals, including dental implants.

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