



DIABETES HEALTH

Diabetes and Periodontal Diseases: A Two-Way Street

If you have diabetes, you know that it's important to regulate your blood sugar levels for the well-being of your body from head to toe. But, you may not know that what happens to you from head to toe can affect your diabetes.

According to the American Diabetes Association, diabetes is not a single disease; it occurs in several forms and has complications that affect virtually every system of the body. If you have diabetes, you may be at a greater risk for developing other medical conditions, including periodontal diseases (also known as gum disease).

Periodontal diseases are chronic bacterial gum infections that inflame gum tissue and destroy the attachment fibers and supporting bone that hold your teeth in your mouth.

Left untreated, the teeth may fall out or need to be removed.

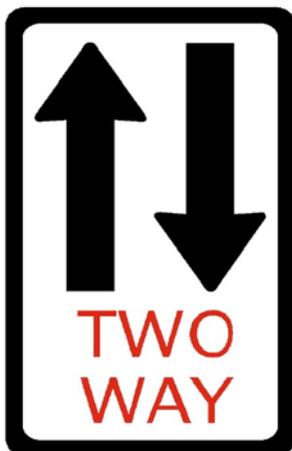
Periodontal diseases are the sixth leading complications of diabetes. Studies show that diabetic patients are up to 4.2 times more likely to develop periodontal diseases than those without diabetes. This is probably because diabetic patients are more susceptible to contracting infections.

Research suggests that the relationship between periodontal diseases and diabetes goes both ways - periodontal diseases may make it more difficult for people who have diabetes to control their blood sugar. Periodontal diseases may increase blood sugar, contributing to increased periods of time when the body functions with a high blood sugar. Consequently, it is important for diabetic patients to

treat periodontal diseases to eliminate the infection. In fact, periodontal treatment combined with antibiotics has been shown to improve blood sugar levels in diabetic patients, suggesting that treating patients' periodontal diseases could decrease insulin requirements.

The good news is that if your diabetes is under control, you are less likely to develop periodontal diseases than someone whose diabetes is poorly controlled. A study published in the *Journal of Periodontology* concluded that poorly controlled diabetic patients respond differently to bacterial plaque at the gum line than well-controlled diabetic patients. Poorly controlled patients with diabetes also have more harmful proteins in their gum tissue causing destructive inflammation of the gums.

See a periodontist for a periodontal evaluation, and begin taking care of your oral health today. You may also want to visit the AAP's Web site at <http://www.perio.org>. ↓↑



For more information visit www.perio.org

Listen To Your Mouth For Health Clues

Since doctors believe many health complications can be prevented with good diabetic control, it's important to pay attention to what your oral health is telling you. Signs and symptoms related to oral health may provide clues about the presence of diabetes or uncontrolled diabetes. Investigate your mouth and take note of some of the following clues:

- Bleeding gums when you brush or floss
- Red, swollen or tender gums

- Gums that have pulled away from your teeth

- Dry mouth

If you notice any of the clues listed above, you will want to contact your periodontist or dentist, and inform them of your symptoms. You can have periodontal diseases without any symptoms, so a periodontal evaluation is the best way to know if you have any periodontal diseases.

Proper oral hygiene is the best method to prevent periodontal diseases. Prevention includes daily flossing to break up the bacterial colonies between the teeth, proper daily brushing to prevent plaque buildup and professional cleanings at least twice a year to remove calculus from places the toothbrush and floss may have missed. ☺

The American Academy of Periodontology Patient Page is a public service of the AAP and should not be used as a substitute for the care and advice of your personal periodontist. There may be variations in treatment that your periodontist will recommend based on individual facts and circumstances. Call 1-800-FLOSS-EM for a free brochure on periodontal disease.