

YOUR Oral Health & Diabetes

Know the connections between oral health and diabetes.



Research shows that there's a two-way relationship between diabetes and oral

health. People with diabetes are at a greater risk for periodontal disease, which is a chronic inflammation of the gums and surrounding tissue and bone. Periodontal disease, in turn, has an adverse effect on blood-glucose control, which can contribute to the progression of diabetes.

Gum disease can also make it tougher for you to control your blood sugar. Research suggests that moderate to severe periodontal disease may increase blood sugar, decrease the effects of insulin, and increase risks for diabetic complications.

If you have diabetes, you can help maximize your overall health by maintaining good oral health.

The Path to Oral Health

How so? The American Dental Association (ADA) recommends



brushing at least twice daily, and flossing daily. Check with your dentist to learn if there's a toothbrush (hard or soft bristle) that's best for you. (Dentists usually recommend a soft brush, according to the ADA).

It's important how you brush. To best reach all sides of your teeth, hold your toothbrush at a 45-degree angle to your gums, and use short back-and-forth motions. If you're using an electric toothbrush, apply the bristles straight on to the tooth. Hold the brush vertically to reach the back of upper and lower front teeth. Clean the crevices on the chewing surfaces of your teeth, too.

Finally, brush your tongue and inside your cheeks because

both have pores where bacteria hide.

Brushing can't always reach those tight spots between your teeth, so use dental floss, an interdental cleaner, or a "water pick" to get between those teeth.

Flossing does more than remove the plaque that causes tooth decay. It gets rid of food debris that, if left between your teeth, causes bad breath and may lead to gum disease.

Lastly, in terms of home dental care, rinse your mouth when you're done to keep your mouth as clean as it can be.

More tips to help you with your overall health:

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- Maintain a nutritious diet. Sweets, soft drinks, and other non-nutritious foods can lead to tooth decay. When bacteria in the mouth mixes with the sugars in these foods, it produce acids that attack the teeth.
- Limit unhealthy snacking.
- Visit your dentist regularly for professional cleanings and oral exams.
- Inform your dentist immediately if you are experiencing red, swollen or tender gums; bleeding while brushing or flossing; gums that pull away from the teeth and/or loose or separating teeth; red, white or swollen areas in any part of your mouth; or persistent bad breath. They could be signs of gum disease.

Advise your dentist about your diabetes, or if you're pregnant, receiving chemotherapy or taking medications for another chronic

Did you know

Prevalence: In 2018, 34.2 million Americans, or 10.5% of the population, had diabetes.

Nearly 1.6 million Americans have type 1 diabetes, including about 187,000 children and adolescents.


Undiagnosed: Of the 34.2 million adults with diabetes, 26.8 million were diagnosed, and 7.3 million were undiagnosed.

The percentage of Americans age 65 and older remains high, at 26.8%, or 14.3 million seniors (diagnosed and undiagnosed).

1.5 million Americans are diagnosed with diabetes every year.

In 2015, 88 million Americans age 18 and older had prediabetes. Prediabetes means you have a higher than normal blood sugar level. It's not high enough to be considered type 2 diabetes yet, but without lifestyle changes, adults and children with prediabetes are more likely to develop type 2 diabetes.

Sources: American Diabetes Association (diabetes.org) and Mayo Clinic (mayoclinic.org)



medical condition, or if there's been any change in your health. Your dentist can help you manage the oral conditions that may result from medical conditions or treatments. Educating yourself on these and other important oral health topics will help you maintain a healthy smile and help control your diabetes. 🦷

FYI: More information can be found online at the TRICARE Dental Program's (TDP) Dental Health Center (uccitdp.com); the Academy of General Dentistry (agd.org); the American Dental Association (ada.org); and the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (nidcr.nih.gov).

Fact sheets in United Concordia's oral health series:



• Fluoride & Your Oral Health



• Oral Health & Diabetes



• Oral Health: Infant to Teen



• Oral Health & Your Overall Wellness



• Oral Health for Kids with Special Needs



• Preventive Oral Care for Everyone



• Your Oral Health & Heart Disease



• Your Oral Health & Lupus



• Your Oral Health & Oral Cancer



• Your Oral Health & Organ Transplants



• Your Oral Health & Rheumatoid Arthritis



• Your Oral Health & Pregnancy

Download fact sheets from the TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) Dental Health Center: uccitdp.com