



Your mouth is talking. *Are you listening?*

Checking your blood sugar?

How about checking your gums. People with diabetes have a higher risk of tooth decay and gum disease.

Controlling your blood sugar helps. So does brushing and flossing. And please – see that dentist. YOUR MOUTH



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Oral Health and Diabetes Management

Did you know dentists can be the first referrers of patients for diabetes testing and diagnosis? Your teeth are among the many reasons why it is important to control your blood sugar. Talk to a diabetes educator for guidance on diabetes management and follow these tips from the Missouri Dental Association (MDA).

- **PERIODONTAL (GUM) DISEASE** People with diabetes are at an increased risk of developing gum disease and often experience more severe forms of it than those without diabetes because they take longer to heal and have a lower resistance to disease. See your dentist or periodontist every three to six months if you experience symptoms such as red, swollen, tender or bleeding gums. Bad breath may be a helpful reminder to get checked for gum disease and to get into the habit of regular checkups. Controlling your blood sugar reduces your risk for developing gum disease.
- **TOOTH DECAY** Higher levels of glucose in saliva promote the growth of bacteria that cause plaque. Take extra care to brush and floss twice daily and see your dentist twice a year. Controlling your blood sugar reduces your risk of tooth decay.

It is common for people who have diabetes to lose the ability to taste sweets, leading many to choose sweeter foods that can result in tooth decay.
- **ORAL FUNGUS** Oral infections are more common among people with diabetes because of a lower resistance to disease. One type is a yeast-like fungus that creates rashes in the corners of the mouth. A second causes creamy, white blisters, usually on the tongue or inner cheeks. These problems can be made worse in people wearing dentures or partials. Infections can be treated with antifungal medication and prevented by good oral hygiene.
- **SCREENING** Oral infections and gum disease can be more severe and difficult to treat in people with diabetes. For this reason, a regular oral health screening is as important as a foot health screening and is a habit worth making.

SOURCES

American Diabetes Association, Mayo Clinic

Brush, floss and visit your MDA dentist.

For more on what your mouth is trying to tell you, visit YourMouthIsTalking.org.