

Keeping your gums, mouth and teeth healthy

Diabetes increases your chance of developing gum disease, and everybody is at risk of gingivitis – the first step on the way to destructive periodontal disease.

If tooth cleaning is incomplete and plaque is allowed to build up on the teeth around the gum margin, then gingivitis will develop. However, only about 30% of those with gingivitis will go on to develop periodontitis. Those with other diseases that affect the immune system – such as diabetes – tend to be more susceptible to the destructive form of gum disease called periodontitis.

Did you know?

- > Gum disease is more common in people with diabetes than in people without diabetes
- > Among young adults, those with diabetes have about twice the risk of those without diabetes
- > Almost 30% of people with diabetes have severe gum disease with loss of attachment of the gums to the teeth
- > People with diabetes who manage their blood glucose levels tend to have no more gum disease than those without diabetes and respond better to treatment
- > People with diabetes who do not manage their blood glucose levels lose more teeth and have more oral complications than those without diabetes.

What are the symptoms of gum disease?

In the mildest form of the disease, gingivitis, the gums redden, swell and bleed easily. There is usually little or no discomfort. Gingivitis is mostly caused by inadequate oral hygiene. Gingivitis is reversible with professional treatment and good oral home care. Untreated gingivitis can advance to periodontitis. With time, plaque can spread and grow below the gum line. Toxins produced by the bacteria in plaque irritate the gums. The toxins stimulate a chronic inflammatory response in which the body in essence turns on itself, and the tissues and bone that support the teeth are broken down and destroyed. Gums separate from the teeth, forming pockets (spaces between the teeth and gums) that become infected. As the disease progresses, the pockets deepen and more gum tissue and bone are destroyed. Teeth can then become loose or drift away from their original position. Eventually, teeth may have to be removed.



Take the right steps to healthy gums, mouth and teeth



Manage your **blood glucose** levels



Brush your teeth twice a day and **floss** every day



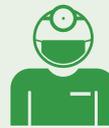
Eat **healthy food**



Check your mouth regularly for any problems – bleeding gums, dryness, soreness, white patches, or a bad taste in the mouth.



Be **smokefree**



Visit your dentist at least twice a year



Do at least 30 minutes of physical activity each day – it has been shown to reduce levels of C-reactive protein in the blood, a marker of inflammation associated with cardiovascular disease and gum disease.



Visit your dentist if you have any problems with your gums, mouth or teeth.

Your checklist for visiting your dentist



Tell your dentist you have diabetes, what medicines you take, and any problems you have with managing your blood glucose levels.



Take your usual medicines before your visit, unless your dentist or doctor tells you to change your dose for dental surgery.



Eat before you see your dentist. The best time for dental work is when your blood glucose level is in a normal range.



Stick to your normal meals after dental work. If you can't chew well, plan how to get the food you need. You may need to eat soft or liquid foods.



If you take insulin, **a morning visit after a normal breakfast is best.**



If your diabetes is poorly managed, **talk to your dentist and doctor about options** for dental treatment.

Diabetes New Zealand is a national membership organisation. Our aim is to support people affected by diabetes and health professionals throughout New Zealand. We act for people affected by diabetes by:

Providing local support • Acting as an advocate • Raising awareness of diabetes, especially interventions that will prevent type 2 diabetes or reduce diabetes complications • Educating and informing people about diabetes, its treatment, management and control • Supporting research into the treatment, prevention and cure of diabetes.