



DENTAL CARE IRELAND
Your Local Practice

PATIENT INFORMATION



DIABETES AND ORAL HEALTH

www.dentalcareireland.ie

DIABETES AND ORAL HEALTH

People with poor diabetes control can be more prone to oral health problems such as gum disease, dry mouth, poor healing and oral infections. In order to prevent mouth complications, looking after your dental health is an essential part of learning to live with diabetes.

HOW TO MAINTAIN A HEALTHY MOUTH

If you have diabetes, you can help keep your mouth healthy by following a number of key steps:

- Monitor your blood glucose levels and take medication as directed
- Brush teeth twice daily using a fluoride toothpaste, especially at night
- Floss teeth every day
- Eat a healthy, balanced diet
- Visit your dentist for regular check-ups
- Do not smoke

PREPARING FOR A DENTAL VISIT

It is important to inform your dentist if you have diabetes, as it helps inform your dental treatment and how often you may need to visit for a dental check-up.

- Always ensure that your dentist is aware that you have diabetes
- Try to eat a main meal before attending your dental appointment, as recommended by your diabetes care team
- Let your dentist know what medications you are taking
- If it applies to you, check your blood glucose levels before the appointment

DIABETES AND ORAL HEALTH COMPLICATIONS

If diabetes is not correctly controlled, you can be more likely to develop oral health problems.

Symptoms can include:

- Sore or swollen gums
- Bleeding gums
- Receding gums
- Loose teeth
- Bad breath

1. GUM DISEASE

Gum disease, also known as periodontitis, is the sixth most common disease in the world. People with diabetes can be at greater risk of developing gum disease, especially if their blood glucose is not monitored.

Among the first signs of gum disease are red, swollen gums that bleed when you brush your teeth. If left untreated, gum disease can lead to pain, infection and eventually loss of teeth.

As your body fights the infection, gum disease can also result in higher blood glucose levels and issues with food intake, which in turn may make diabetes difficult to control.

There are typically three stages of gum disease:

Gingivitis: Gingivitis is the initial stage of gum disease, caused by poor oral hygiene and irregular plaque removal from teeth. It is characterised by swollen, red and tender gums and it can cause bleeding when brushing. By improving your oral hygiene techniques and visiting your dentist or hygienist for advice, however, it is generally possible to reverse the damage.

Mild Periodontitis: Untreated gingivitis can lead to mild periodontitis. It is typically more common in people who have a family history of gum disease, poor oral hygiene and uncontrolled diabetes. At this stage, there will be damage to the gums and bone supporting the teeth. It is essential to visit your dentist in order to prevent further progression.

Severe Periodontitis: This is the most advanced stage of gum disease, characterised by significant tissue and bone loss around the teeth. In most cases, gum disease is treatable. However, the earlier the diagnosis, the better the treatment outcome.



DENTAL CARE IRELAND
Your Local Practice





2. ORAL INFECTIONS

People with irregular blood glucose control are more likely to develop oral infections such as thrush. Thrush is a common fungal infection which can occur in the mouth, sometimes secondary to dry mouth or following a course of broad-spectrum antibiotics. It can also be triggered by wearing poorly fitting dentures.

Signs of oral thrush include white patches within the mouth, redness of the tongue and cracking of the skin at the corner of the lips.

3. POOR HEALING

If diabetes is inappropriately controlled, it can affect the time the gums take to heal. Healing may be slower after having a tooth out, for example, and the risk of infection is increased. If you have diabetes and you are a smoker, the healing process will be even slower still.

4. DRY MOUTH

If your blood sugars are high, you may notice that your mouth is dry. This could also be caused by the medication that you take. Dry mouth may increase your risk of tooth decay. If you experience a dry mouth, sip tap water frequently or try chewing sugar-free gum. Your dentist may also recommend a saliva substitute.

**This information is not intended as a substitute for consultation with a healthcare professional. Your dentist can help you to prevent and manage oral health issues as part of your overall diabetes care.*

TOP TEN DENTAL HEALTH TIPS

Dr Paul O'Dwyer, Group Clinical Advisor,
Dental Care Ireland

1

Brush your teeth twice daily, especially last thing at night

2

Use a timer to make sure you brush for a full two minutes

3

Floss teeth once a day to remove plaque, preferably before brushing

4

Use a fluoride toothpaste to help keep teeth strong and prevent dental decay

5

Reduce frequency of sugary snacks and carbonated drinks

6

Spit out excess toothpaste after brushing but avoid rinsing, so that fluoride remains on your teeth

7

Drink plenty of water to help dilute any acid attacks caused by food or drinks

8

If you experience a dry mouth, sip tap water frequently or try chewing sugar-free gum

9

At the first sign of sore, swollen or bleeding gums, visit your dentist for advice on preventing and managing gum disease

10

Schedule a full dental check-up with your dentist at least once a year, or more frequently as advised



www.diabetes.ie/oralhealth



DENTAL CARE IRELAND
Your Local Practice



Find your local practice at
www.dentalcareireland.ie