



## On Call<sup>®</sup> Advisor Diabetes and Oral Health

# Diabetes and Oral Health

Diabetes affects millions of people each year globally and it can also cause problems with your eyes, heart, kidneys, nerves and teeth. People with diabetes are at higher risk for gum and tooth diseases such as cavities, gingivitis and periodontal disease.

- **Cavities** - (tooth decay) occur when plaque, a sticky film, forms on your teeth. The acids in plaque attack the hard, outer surface of your teeth, leading to cavities. When your blood sugar is high, it means there is a greater supply of sugars and starches. More sugars and starches will lead to more acid attacking the external layer of your teeth.



- **Gingivitis** - (early gum disease) is when your gums become swollen and bleed easily. When you have diabetes, your ability to fight bacteria reduces, and it causes more plaque to build up on your teeth. If you do not clean your teeth regularly, the plaque will turn into a harden substance called tartar. The longer the plaque and tartar stays on your teeth, the easier your gum becomes infected.
- **Periodontal disease** - (advanced gum disease) is the effect of untreated gingivitis. It can infect the gum and bone that holds your teeth in place, leading to infections in the mouth and painful chewing problems. If this disease is not treated properly, people might risk losing their teeth. This gum disease is definitely linked to the control of your blood glucose level. When patients with diabetes control their blood glucose well, the risk of getting gum or bone infections decreases.

# Symptoms of Periodontal (Gum) Disease

- Swollen, tender or red gums.
- Bleeding gums when you floss or brush your teeth.
- Gums that have pulled away from your teeth. When part of the tooth's root is showing or your tooth may look longer than before.
- Bad breath.
- Pus (infectious fluid) when you press on your teeth and gums.
- Permanent teeth that is loose.
- A bite that feels different from before.
- Dentures that does not fit well.



## Tips to Keeping My Teeth and Gum Healthy

- Keep your blood glucose level close to your target ranges. Please consult your physicians for your individual blood glucose target ranges.
- Floss your teeth at least once a day. Flossing helps to prevent plaque from building up and causing mouth infections.
- Brush your teeth with a soft toothbrush after each meal and snack.
- If you have false teeth or dentures, keep them clean.
- Seek your dentist right away when you have problems with your gums or teeth.
- Get your teeth cleaned and gums checked every 6 months.
- Make sure that your dentist knows that you have diabetes.
- If your mouth feels dry, drink lots of water or chew sugarless gum.
- Quit smoking.
- Avoid alcohol.

## Helps from Your Dentist

- Cleaning and checking your teeth and gum every 6 months.
- Teaching and helping you learn the best way to brush and floss your teeth.
- Informing you of problems with your teeth or gums and advising you what to do about them.
- Making sure your dentures and false teeth fits properly.

This material is general information for diabetes and neuropathy. If you need a more specific treatment for your health, please consult your healthcare provider.