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Spring 2018



Diabetes and Your Smile

By Laura Martin, Case Western Reserve University School of Dental Medicine

Did you know that 29.1 million people living in the United States have **diabetes**? That's 9.3% of the population. Approximately 1.7 million new cases are diagnosed each year—and 8.1 million people living with diabetes don't even know they have it.

Diabetes affects your body's ability to process sugar. All food you eat is turned to sugar and used for energy. In Type I diabetes, the body doesn't make enough insulin, a hormone that carries sugar from your blood to the cells that need it for energy. In Type II diabetes, the body stops responding to insulin. Both cases result in high blood sugar levels, which can cause problems with your eyes, nerves, kidneys, heart and other parts of your body.

So what does this have to do with that smile of yours — and how can you protect it? First, it's important to understand the signs of diabetes and the roles they play in your mouth.

The Symptoms of Untreated Diabetes

The **warning signs** of diabetes affect every part of your body. After a blood test, you may be told by a doctor that you have high blood sugar. You may feel excessively thirsty or must urinate a lot. Weight loss and fatigue are other common symptoms. Diabetes can also cause you to lose consciousness if your blood sugar falls too low. If diabetes is left untreated, it can take a toll on your mouth as well. Here's how:

- You may have less saliva, causing your mouth to feel dry. (Dry mouth is also caused by certain medications.)
- Because saliva protects your teeth, you're also at a higher risk of cavities.
- Gums may become inflamed and bleed often (**gingivitis**).
- You may have problems tasting food.
- You may experience delayed wound healing.
- You may be susceptible to infections inside of your mouth.
- For children with diabetes, teeth may erupt at an age earlier than is typical.



Be Informed – Additional Dental Insurance Benefits May be Available.

Evidence-Based Integrated Care Plan

More than 3,800 employer groups have added Delta Dental of Wisconsin's Evidence-Based Integrated Care Plan (EBICP) to their dental benefit plans. EBICP provides enhanced dental benefits for pregnant women; people with kidney failure, diabetes, periodontal disease, specific high risk cardiac conditions, or suppressed immune system conditions; and people undergoing dialysis, cancer-related chemotherapy, and/or radiation treatments.

Diabetes Evidence has shown a greater prevalence, incidence, severity, extent, and/or progression of periodontal disease in diabetics. Patients with diabetes are eligible for up to two additional visits in a benefit year for periodontal maintenance or adult prophylaxis.

Why People with Diabetes Are More Prone to Gum Disease

All people have more tiny bacteria living in their mouth now than there are people on this planet. If they make their home in your gums, you can end up with **periodontal disease**. This chronic, inflammatory disease can destroy your gums, all the tissues holding your teeth and even your bones.

Periodontal disease is the most common dental disease affecting those living with diabetes, affecting nearly 22% of those diagnosed. Especially with increasing age, poor blood sugar control increases the risk for gum problems. In fact, people with diabetes are at a higher risk for gum problems because of poor blood sugar control. As with all infections, serious gum disease may cause blood sugar to rise. This makes diabetes harder to control because you are more susceptible to infections and are less able to fight the bacteria invading the gums.

How Your Dentist Can Help You Fight Diabetes

Regular dental visits are important. Research suggests that treating gum disease can help improve blood sugar control in patients living with diabetes, decreasing the progression of the disease. Practicing good oral hygiene and having professional deep cleanings done by your dentist can help to lower your HbA1c. (This is a lab test that shows your average level of blood sugar over the previous three months. It indicates how well you are controlling your diabetes.)

Your Diabetes Dental Health Action Plan

Teamwork involving self-care and professional care from your dentist will be beneficial in keeping your healthy smile as well as potentially slowing progression of diabetes. Here are five oral health-related things you can do to for optimal wellness:

- Control your blood sugar levels. Use your diabetes-related medications as directed, changing to a **healthier diet** and even exercising more can help. Good blood sugar control will also help your body fight any bacterial or fungal infections in your mouth and help relieve dry mouth caused by diabetes.
- Avoid smoking.
- If you wear any type of denture, clean it each day.
- Make sure to brush twice a day with a soft brush and clean between your teeth daily.
- See your dentist for regular checkups



Introducing, Kathy Long, RDH

Hello, my name is Kathy Long, the newest member of Dr Bearjar's Dental team. I graduated from the University of Pittsburgh's Dental Hygiene program in 1983, which began my dental career. After living in several Northeastern states while my husband Roy was pursuing his PHD in Biochemistry, we moved to Milwaukee WI in 1998, where he started his research lab at the Medical College of WI in the Microbiology department. We have a daughter Rachel, who lives in the Twin Cities and will be starting Physical Therapy school in July at the University of MN.

Most recently we moved to Weston so my husband could accept the position of Assistant Dean of Basic Science Curriculum for the Medical College of WI Medical School Central WI Regional Campus in Wausau. The move has been a good transition back to a quieter, small town lifestyle which is very similar to our upbringing in Pennsylvania.

I enjoy the outdoors, walking my dog, golfing with my husband and gardening. I look forward to meeting you in Dr Bearjar's office where I hope to provide the best dental care



Dental Options has joined the Delta Dental PPO network and are accepting new patients.

Please pass the word, tell your friends, family and co-workers.



*April Showers
Bring May Flowers
April is Patient Appreciation
Month*

Please stop by to register in April to win May flowers. The drawing will take place on May 1, 2018. The winner will be awarded a May planting basket with a greenhouse gift card.