



Figure 3: Gums with moderate periodontal disease

Dental problems linked with diabetes

- Gum disease
- Slow healing after extractions or oral surgery
- Oral infections including fungal infections, such as thrush – notify your dentist if you notice changes in your mouth, such as patches of whitish-colored skin
- Dry mouth and taste impairment

Your dentist needs to know

- If you have been diagnosed with diabetes
- If you have trouble keeping your blood sugar levels under control
- If there have been other changes in your medical history
- The names of any medications [prescription as well as over-the-counter drugs] you are taking

Your doctor needs to know

- If your dentist has told you that you have gum disease
- If you have had gum disease successfully treated

Dental care checklist

- Control your blood sugar level
- QUIT smoking
- look for early signs of gum disease
- keep to your healthy eating plan and take prescribed medications as your doctor directs
- brush twice a day with FLUORIDE toothpaste and a soft brush
- take care to remove all plaque on and between your teeth, and next to the gum line
- use dental floss every day to clean difficult-to-reach areas
- clean dentures and remove overnight
- visit your dentist at least once a year and ask to have your gums checked
- book your appointments for the morning when your insulin level is more stable

If you have diabetes, you are more likely to have gum disease.

If your gum disease is controlled, your blood sugar level is likely to be easier to control.

Your dentist may refer you to a dental specialist in gum diseases – a periodontist

Further information

Dental Practice Education Research Unit
ARCPDH, School of Dentistry
The University of Adelaide
South Australia 5005
Email: dperu@adelaide.edu.au
Website: www.arcpdh.adelaide.edu.au/dperu

**Dental care
for people
with
diabetes**

– extra care is
needed

Diabetes



Colgate Dental Education Programs

Diabetes

Healthy teeth and gums are vital to people with diabetes. Your dentist can help you avoid gum disease and tooth loss.

- Strong teeth and healthy gums are the first step in making sure that you can chew and enjoy a wide range of healthy foods.
- Teeth that are sore or loose in your gums make it hard to keep to a healthy eating plan, as can ill-fitting dentures.
- Gum infections can make it more difficult to keep your blood sugar level under control.

People with diabetes are more likely to develop gum disease, and if their blood sugar level remains high, their gum problems are likely to be worse.

What causes gum disease?

Plaque bacteria produce toxins that cause red, swollen gums that may bleed when you clean your teeth. Plaque bacteria can also cause periodontal disease, which can slowly and painlessly damage your gums and destroy the bone that holds your teeth.

Untreated periodontal disease may cause you to lose teeth

High blood sugar can cause tooth and gum problems. Gum disease causes damage to the gums and the bone supporting the teeth.

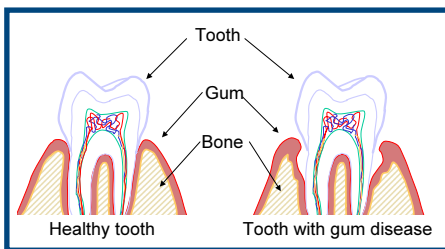


Figure 1: Tooth with gum disease shows swollen gums; pockets formed as gums separate from teeth; bone loss

Smokers have higher levels of gum disease, caused by poor/impaired blood circulation in the tissues around their teeth. People with diabetes who smoke have an even greater chance of having severe gum problems than non-smokers and non-diabetics.

Controlling dental problems

Careful cleaning of teeth to remove plaque is particularly important for people with diabetes. If you have good control of your blood sugar level and good oral care, you should have minimal problems with your oral health.

If your diabetes has been poorly controlled, you are likely to have more gum disease as well as other oral health problems.

To find out if you have periodontal disease, you need to have a thorough dental examination.

Take good care of your mouth and see your dentist regularly for:

- monitoring the health of your gums and
- removal of tartar buildup.

Figure 2: Healthy teeth and gums



Extractions or oral surgery

If your blood sugar level is poorly controlled:

- healing may be slow after extractions or oral surgery
- your dentist may advise you to delay treatment/surgical procedures; if possible wait until your blood sugar level is improved
- if you need treatment urgently, your dentist may need to prescribe antibiotics or discuss your condition and current medications with your doctor before beginning your treatment.

You should always follow diet or wound-care instructions carefully to minimize the chance of infections.

What are the warning signs of gum disease?

See your dentist immediately if your:

- gums bleed easily
- gums are red, swollen or tender
- bad breath or bad taste persists
- permanent teeth are loose or 'drifting away'