

When you have diabetes, dental care can be a challenge

# These simple tips can help

If you have diabetes, high blood sugar can affect your teeth and gums in more ways than you may realize. So good dental care should be pretty high on your to-do list.

## High blood sugar levels increase your risk for:<sup>1</sup>

- **Cavities (tooth decay).** The higher your blood sugar level, the more sugars, starches and acid can wear away at your teeth and cause plaque, which can lead to cavities.
- **Early gum disease (gingivitis).** Diabetes makes it harder to fight off bacteria. If plaque builds up, it can harden into tartar which can lead to gums that bleed and become swollen.
- **Advanced gum disease (periodontitis).** Gum disease can destroy the tissue and bone that support your teeth and can even affect your jawbone. Diabetes also makes it harder to fight off gum infections and heal from gum disease, which can then make diabetes hard to control.

## Look for these telltale signs of periodontal disease from diabetes.

See your dentist right away if you have one or more of these symptoms:

- Gums that are: red, sore, swollen or bleeding
- Gums that have pulled away from your teeth (recession)
- Persistent bad breath or bad taste in your mouth
- Heavy deposits of milky white or yellow plaque
- Pus between the teeth and gums (abscess)



## Treating gum disease early can save you money.

- Patients with diabetes who treat their gum disease have 39% fewer hospital stays and 40% lower health care costs.<sup>2</sup>
- If you catch a minor dental problem early, you can avoid more costly treatments down the road.

## Good dental health is actually pretty simple. (We've got the checklist below to prove it.)

### Checklist for a healthy mouth

- ✓ Limit food and drinks that are high in sugar.
- ✓ Brush with a soft-bristled toothbrush at least two times a day.
- ✓ When you can swing it, brush after meals and snacks.
- ✓ Use a toothpaste that has fluoride.
- ✓ Floss once a day.
- ✓ Get cleanings and checkups by a pro — visit your dentist every six months.
- ✓ See a dentist right away if you think you may have gum disease.

## We're always here to help.

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Our legal team wants us to remind you that we're not giving you medical advice here. That's a special conversation between you and your doctor! Our goal is to help you get the most from your health plan. Curious what's covered? Log in to our website to see your personalized benefits.

1 American Journal of Preventive Medicine's Impact of Periodontal Therapy on General Health Study, June 2014 [http://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749-3797\(14\)00153-6/abstract](http://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749-3797(14)00153-6/abstract)

2 Mayo Clinic website: *Diabetes and dental care: Guide to a healthy mouth* (accessed April 2016): [mayoclinic.org](http://mayoclinic.org)

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