

How can I prevent gum disease?

1. Brushing and flossing

- Brush your teeth twice a day and floss once a day – ask your dentist to show you how.
- Use a small head, soft bristle toothbrush and replace it every four months (each change of season is a good reminder).
- If you have full or partial dentures, clean them daily and remove them each night before sleep.

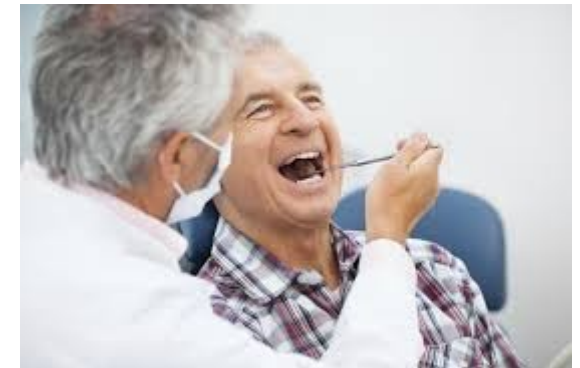
2. Regular dental visits

- Visit your dentist at least once every six months to prevent minor problems becoming major ones.
- Professional cleaning helps remove tartar build-up in areas not reached with regular brushing and flossing.
- Remind your dentist you have diabetes at every visit.



Creating Smiles with Care

Diabetes and your Oral Health



216 Bazaar St, Maryborough

Tel: 07 4121 3726

www.toothworkx.com.au

Diabetes and your Oral Health

People with diabetes, regardless of their age, are at greater risk of developing gum disease than people who do not have diabetes. Gum disease (Gingivitis or Periodontitis) is a bacterial infection in the mouth that will get steadily worse if not treated. It can cause your blood glucose levels to rise and it can also lead to tooth loss. However, there are several things you can do to protect yourself from gum disease.

Gingivitis

This is a common gum disease caused by bacteria in plaque, a sticky film of food, saliva and germs that forms on the teeth. If plaque is not removed properly, it hardens into tartar that builds up under the gum line and can only be removed by your dentist. The major symptom of gingivitis is inflamed gums that bleed, especially when brushing.

Periodontitis

If gingivitis is left untreated, it can lead to a more severe gum disease called periodontitis, and inflammation of the gums caused by infection. Gums can come away from the teeth causing 'pockets' to form. Plaque and tartar can build up in these pockets and cannot be reached by brushing or with mouth washes. This infection can destroy the bone and ligaments surrounding the tooth, resulting in tooth loss.

People with diabetes who often have high blood glucose levels are two to three times more likely to develop gum disease than those with well-controlled blood glucose levels.

How do high blood glucose levels affect my teeth and gums?

High blood glucose levels can cause:

- A narrowing of the blood vessels including those in the mouth which can reduce blood supply to the gums therefore increasing the risk of infection.
- A decrease in saliva causing a dry mouth. This can lead to an increase in the plaque and tartar build-up that causes gum disease. A dry mouth can also be caused by some common medicines. If you have a dry mouth, discuss it with your doctor or pharmacist and ask about products that may help to treat it.
- A gathering of sugars in the gingival fluid (the fluid between the tooth and gums) which can increase your risk of developing dental cavities.
- Fungal mouth infections such as thrush. Thrush appears as white (sometimes red) patches in the mouth and on the tongue. These patches can get sore and turn into ulcers. Well-controlled blood glucose levels help to avoid thrush. Not smoking and, if you have dentures, taking them out at night also help. See your doctor for treatment if thrush develops.

Can gum disease affect my diabetes?

Some studies suggest that as gum disease is an infection, it can contribute to higher blood glucose levels. Professional treatment of gum disease, combined with regular brushing and flossing, will reduce infection and can help to improve blood glucose levels.

What are the signs of gum disease?

Many people do not realise they have signs of gum disease and regular dental examinations may be the only way to detect them. Other people may experience:

- red, swollen, tender gums that bleed easily
- gums that have pulled away from the teeth
- bad breath
- pus between the teeth and gums
- loose teeth, teeth moving apart or a change in the fit of dentures

