

# Diabetes and Dental Care

## The Oral Connection

“Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey understands that my dentist can spot serious health risks like diabetes.”



Although the exact cause of diabetes is a mystery, your dentist may be able to spot early signs of the disease.

Diabetes is a disease in which the body does not produce or properly use insulin. Insulin is a hormone needed to convert sugar, starches and other food you consume into the energy you need for daily life. Research indicates that 17 million people in the United States have diabetes and more than five million are unaware they have it. Early detection is important because when left untreated, diabetes can lead to other serious health complications such as kidney disease, heart disease, stroke, nerve damage and blindness. Dentists can play an important role in spotting undiagnosed diabetes and helping to manage the dental effects of the disease.

Uncontrolled diabetes impairs white blood cells, a main defense against bacterial infection. Because periodontal disease is a bacterial infection, people with uncontrolled diabetes are more likely to have it, and it is likely to be more severe.

Gum disease makes it more difficult for diabetics to control their blood sugar. So, controlling gum disease may help you control your diabetes. Let your dentist know if you have been diagnosed with diabetes and if it is under control.

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# People with diabetes can have:

- **Rapidly progressing periodontal (gum) disease.**
- **Gum inflammation.**
- **Dry mouth.**
- **Poor healing of oral tissues.**
- **Thrush.**
- **Burning mouth and/or tongue.**

**Be sure to visit your dentist regularly ...  
it could improve the quality of your life.**

Sources: American Dental Association, [www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org)  
The American Diabetes Association, [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org)



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