

MEDIA RELEASE

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Raising awareness of the links between diabetes and gum disease

Dental Health Week (August 6 to 12)

This Dental Health Week, the Australian Dental Association NSW is highlighting the links between gum disease and diabetes, and reminding people with the disease, to see their dentist for regular check-ups.

- Diabetes is the fastest growing chronic condition in Australia, with 280 people developing diabetes every day. Around 1.7 million Australians are living with diabetes, including an estimated 500,000 who have undiagnosed type 2 diabetes.
- Gum disease (periodontal disease) is a chronic inflammatory condition that is often painless, but can go unnoticed until it has progressed to a serious stage, where teeth become loose and can ultimately be lost. Once damage to the gums and surrounding bone has occurred, it cannot be repaired, but effective management can stop it progressing further. Nearly a quarter of Australian adults are diagnosed with moderate or severe gum disease.

ADA NSW President Dr Neil Peppitt said many people are unaware of the two-way relationship between diabetes and gum disease.

“If you have gum disease, it may be an early sign of pre-diabetes or type 2 diabetes,” Dr Peppitt said.

“When diabetes is well managed, gum disease is much more successfully managed,” he said.

Diabetes:

- Puts you at greater risk of gum disease
- Can cause prolonged high blood glucose levels which can contribute to the development and worsening of gum disease
- Can reduce the amount of saliva in your mouth, increasing the risk of cavities
- Can make you more susceptible to infections inside the mouth and slow the healing process

Gum disease:

- Puts you at greater risk of pre-diabetes or type 2 diabetes. A recent Melbourne study found 57% of patients presenting to the dentist with gum disease had undiagnosed pre-diabetes
- Can make it harder for people with diabetes to control blood sugar levels
- Can cause significant inflammation, increasing the chance of developing insulin-resistance and therefore increasing the risk of diabetes developing or progressing

“People should visit their dentist for regular check-ups and this is particularly important for people with diabetes,” Dr Peppitt said.

“See your dentist **at least once a year**, or as recommended by your health professional.”

Head of Western Sydney Diabetes, Professor Glen Maberly, said, “Type 2 diabetes is often silent and people can be living with the disease for up to seven years without knowing it.

“Visiting your dentist regularly is a great way to ensure both diabetes and gum disease are picked up and treated early.”

Oral health tips for people living with diabetes

- Visit your dental professional regularly and let them know you have diabetes
- Brush twice daily with fluoride toothpaste to remove dental plaque and protect against gum disease and cavities
- Floss or use interdental cleaners daily to remove dental plaque from between the teeth
- If you wear dentures, rinse them with water after each meal and clean them thoroughly each day with a denture brush and recommended denture cleaner. Make sure you leave them out overnight or spend several hours a day not wearing them. Brush your gums and tongue with a soft toothbrush to keep the mouth clean and healthy
- Make healthy food and drink choices. Tap water is the best drink for good oral health
- Don't smoke. Ask your doctor or dentist for help with quitting or call the Quitline on 137 848

To find a local dentist or gum specialist (periodontist), go to www.ada.org.au/Find-a-Dentist