



# DIABETES AND YOU: Healthy Teeth Matter!

It is important to take good care of your teeth when you have diabetes. Did you know that people with diabetes are more likely to have problems with their teeth and gums? The good news is that you can take steps to help keep your teeth healthy. The tips below will get you started.

## Tips to Keep Your Teeth Healthy

**1. Get a dental exam at least once a year, and more often if your dentist says you need one. At your exam, your dentist or dental hygienist will:**

- Explain how diabetes affects your teeth and gums.
- Check for problems, such as cavities or gum disease (see next page to learn the signs of gum disease).
- Treat any problems you have with your teeth or gums.
- Teach you how to check for signs of gum disease at home.
- Provide care, such as a fluoride treatment, to keep your mouth healthy.
- Tell you how to treat problems, such as dry mouth.

**2. Work with your dentist to create a health plan for your teeth.**

- Ask the best way to take care of your teeth at home.
- Ask how often to come in for a dental visit.
- Ask what to do if you start to have problems with your teeth or gums.
- Ask your dentist to send your exam results to your other doctors after every visit.



## How Can Diabetes Harm Your Teeth?

- Diabetes is associated with gum disease, also known as periodontal disease.
- Gum disease can lead to tooth loss.
- Treatment of gum disease in people with type 2 diabetes can lower blood sugar over time.
- Gum disease treatment can lower your chance of having other problems from diabetes, such as heart and kidney disease.
- Gum disease may increase the risk of type 2 diabetes.





## DIABETES AND YOU: Healthy Teeth Matter!



### 3. Take care of your teeth at home.

- Brush with a soft-bristled toothbrush at least two times a day, using toothpaste with fluoride.
- Floss once a day.
- Visit a dentist if you think you have gum disease.
- Limit food and drinks that are high in sugar.

### What Are the Signs of Gum Disease?

- Red, swollen, or bleeding gums.
- Gums pulling away from teeth.
- Sores on the gums.
- Loose teeth or change in bite or tooth position.
- Bad breath.



### To-do List for Healthy Teeth

- Get a dental exam at least once a year.
- Keep your next dental appointment.
- Check your mouth for red and swollen gums, bleeding gums, loose teeth, a change in how your bite feels, or bad breath.
- Ask your dental provider if you are doing a good job of taking care of your teeth and gums at home.
- Ask your dentist to send your test results to your other doctors after every visit.
- Keep your blood sugar at a healthy level.

### Manage Your ABCs!

Ask your health care team to help you set and reach goals to manage your blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol—also known as the **ABCs** of diabetes. Teach your family about your diabetes and the **ABCs** so they can help you, too.

- **A1c:** The goal set for many people is less than 7% for this blood test, but your doctor might set different goals for you.
- **Bloodpressure:** High blood pressure causes heart disease. The goal is less than 140/90 mmHg for most people, but your doctor might set different goals for you.
- **Cholesterol:** LDL or “bad” cholesterol builds up and clogs your blood vessels. HDL or “good” cholesterol helps remove the “bad” cholesterol from your blood vessels. Ask what your cholesterol numbers should be.
- **Don't smoke:** Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) for support.

### National Diabetes Education Program

For more information, call 1-800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636)

or TTY 1-888-232-6348 or visit [www.cdc.gov/info](http://www.cdc.gov/info).

To order resources, visit [www.cdc.gov/diabetes/ndep](http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/ndep).



NDEP-132  
January 2014