

Diabetes threatens our oral health!

Diabetes does not only have the pathological influence on the patient's general health, but also affects their oral health.

Moreover, if the diabetic's blood sugar level is not well controlled, they will easily suffer from oral disease, such as gum disease. Gum disease is the infection of tissues supporting the teeth. If oral hygiene is poor, dental plaque will accumulate along the gum margin. The bacteria from the dental plaque release toxins that irritate the periodontal tissues (tissues surrounding a tooth) including the gums, periodontal membrane, jaw bone, etc., leading to development of gum disease. In addition, uncontrolled oral diseases may further aggravate the condition of diabetes.

Some diabetics have the experience of wanting to eat, drink and urinate frequently together with a drop of body weight. They also get tired and infection easily. However, the early stage of diabetes is symptomless, the illness is often discovered incidentally when one receives a medical check-up or inspection for other medical complication.

How to prevent diabetes related oral diseases (e.g. gum disease) for a diabetic?

Patient with gum disease will have bad breath, swelling and bleeding gum, gum recession and other symptoms. Severe gum disease will result in the exposure of the tooth root surface, lead to the sensitive and numbness feeling during eating, patient will then have difficulty in chewing.

The healing capability of the diabetics is lower, so it is more difficult for your gum disease to heal. Therefore, effective prevention must be made early.

Control your blood sugar level

Long-term fluctuation of blood sugar level often leads to other medical complications. The subsequent lowered body resistance makes the patients prone to infections.

Take good care for your gums and teeth

To prevent gum disease, you need to foster a good oral care habit. Diabetics not only need to adequately remove the dental plaque by brushing the teeth properly in the morning and at night, but also need to floss the adjacent tooth surfaces daily. Choose correct oral care aids to remove the plaque from the adjacent tooth surfaces in order to facilitate the thorough cleaning of your teeth.

Toothbrushing

- Choose a toothbrush with soft bristles brush. In general, the size of a brush head suitable for adult should be the same as the diameter of a one-dollar coin.
- Brush your teeth with fluoride toothpaste in the morning and at night.
- Keep every tooth surfaces thoroughly clean, including: outer surfaces, inner surfaces and chewing surfaces.
- The toothbrush head should be placed with the tips of the bristles tilted at an angle towards the gum margin. Gently move the toothbrush in small scrubbing motions, working on two to three teeth at one time.

1. Brush outer surfaces of lower teeth



2. Then brush inner surfaces of lower teeth



3. When brushing the inner surfaces of front teeth, hold the toothbrush upright, using gentle motion brushing from the gingival margin towards the crowns of the teeth



4. Then brush the chewing surfaces of the teeth with the toothbrush moving backward and forward



Finally, brush the outer surfaces, inner surfaces and the chewing surfaces of the upper teeth in the same way as the lower one.

Flossing

1. Firstly, take a piece of 20 - 25cm long dental floss to tie a loop.



2. Use the thumbs and forefingers to control a 2cm segment of the floss.



3. Use sawing in and out motion, gently slide the floss into the interdental space of two neighbouring teeth.



4. Wrap around one tooth making a "C" shape and gently pull down to the deepest part of the gingival sulcus, and then slide it up and down against the tooth. Then wrap around the neighbouring tooth and repeat the up and down motions. Clean all the other adjacent tooth surfaces in the same way.



Use of interdental brush

In the case of gum recession due to gum disease, the space between the roots of the neighbouring teeth is widened, an interdental brush may be used instead of dental floss. Gently insert the interdental brush into the gap between the teeth, placing the brush as close to the gum margin as possible, move the brush back and forth to clean the adjacent tooth surfaces.



Use superfloss to clean the fixed dental bridge

Use the spongy segment of the superfloss to clean the surfaces under the bridge. You may remove the dental plaque on the adjacent tooth surfaces with the regular floss segment of the superfloss.





Clean your removable denture

Dental plaque adheres on to the surfaces of a denture. In order to maintain your oral health and the hygiene of your denture, you need to remove your denture for cleaning before bed at night.

1. First, fill the washing basin with some water to prevent accidental drop and fracture of the denture
2. Apply some detergent onto a toothbrush and clean every surface of the denture. Then rinse the denture thoroughly.



3. Immerse the denture into a cup of water overnight.

Regular dental check-up

- You need to inform the dentist about any changes of your diabetic condition and the medicine you take.
- Gum disease in a diabetic can deteriorate rapidly and progress to a serious stage easily. Thus, you need to have a dental check-up every six months.
- A removable denture can become ill-fitting as a result of gum recession and loosening of the teeth due to gum disease. You need to ask the dentist to adjust your denture in the regular dental check-up appointment.

Receive dental treatment

If the patients' blood sugar level is not well controlled, they must postpone the less urgent dental surgery.

Before any tooth extraction or dental treatment, you should have something to eat and then test your blood sugar level. It helps to prevent hypoglycemia because you are unable to have food right after treatment.

No smoking

Research found that the chance of getting gum disease is 5 times or more likely higher for smoker than that of non-smoker. Therefore, patients with diabetes should not smoke.

If you are not aware of having diabetes, how can you prevent gum disease?

Some patients with diabetes are not aware that they have diabetes. After they suffered from gum disease as well as failed to control blood sugar level, gum disease becomes difficult to heal.

Besides, some early diabetics may not have obvious symptoms; the illness is often undiscovered until they have medical complication. Therefore, if your gum disease has no obvious improvement after dental treatment and proper oral care, you are advised to have the blood sugar level checked for diabetes, so that appropriate treatment can be applied.