

A healthy mouth is especially important if you have diabetes

These simple tips can help

If you have diabetes, high blood sugar can affect the health of your teeth and gums. That's why good dental care should be at the top of your to-do list.

High blood sugar levels raise your risk for:¹

- “ Cavities (tooth decay). The higher your blood sugar level, the more sugars, starches, and acid can wear away at your teeth and cause plaque, which can lead to cavities.
- “ Early gum disease (gingivitis). Diabetes makes it harder to fight off bacteria. If plaque builds up, it can harden into tartar, which can lead to gums that bleed and become swollen.
- “ Advanced gum disease (periodontitis). Gum disease can destroy the tissue and bone that support your teeth, and can even affect your jawbone. Diabetes also makes it harder to fight off gum infections and heal from gum disease, which, in turn, can make diabetes hard to control.

The good news is that keeping your teeth clean and your gums healthy is easy. These simple tips can help:

Checklist for a healthy mouth

- Limit food and drinks high in sugar to help prevent cavities.
- Visit a dentist every six months for regular cleanings and checkups.
- Brush your teeth with a soft-bristled toothbrush to reduce gum irritation two times a day — and after meals and snacks when you can.
- Use fluoride toothpaste to help strengthen teeth and prevent cavities.
- Floss every day, at least once a day.

Signs of gum disease from diabetes

If you have one or more of these symptoms, you should see your dentist right away:

- “ Gums that are red, sore, swollen, or bleeding
- “ Gums that have pulled away from your teeth (recession)
- “ Bad breath or a bad taste in your mouth that doesn't go away
- “ Heavy deposits of milky white or yellow plaque
- “ Pus (infection) between the teeth and gums

Early treatment is also key

If you catch a minor dental problem early, you can avoid more costly treatments down the road. People with Type 2 diabetes who get treatment for their gum disease could save up to \$6,000 on health care costs during their lifetime.²

¹ National Library of Medicine, National Center for Biotechnology Information: Impact of treating oral disease on preventing vascular diseases: A model-based cost-effectiveness analysis of periodontal treatment among patients with Type 2 diabetes (December 27, 2019): pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31882408/.

² Mayo Clinic: Diabetes and dental care: Guide to a healthy mouth (October 12, 2018): [mayoclinic.org](https://www.mayoclinic.org).

