

PERIODONTAL DISEASE AND DIABETES

Periodontal disease is a bacterial infection of the gums ["Gingivitis"] and bone ["Periodontitis"] that support your teeth. When periodontal disease is present, your body undergoes an inflammatory process in an attempt to protect and heal the involved tissues. This inflammation may have an impact on a systemic condition such as diabetes.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. *How do I know if I have Periodontal Disease?*

The leading warning sign of Periodontal Disease is bleeding gums on brushing or flossing, neither of which are considered normal. Other indications of Periodontal Disease include bad breath, puffy or receding gums, loose teeth, or a change in your bite. Periodontal Disease is not uncommon; studies show that it is present to some degree in almost 50 percent of Americans aged 30 years or older.

2. *What is the link between Periodontal Disease and Diabetes?*

Patients with uncontrolled or poorly controlled diabetes have a higher incidence of Periodontal Disease and a greater severity of the condition. There also seems to be a two-way link; Periodontal Disease makes blood sugar stabilization more difficult in diabetics. This increases cardiovascular risk. Unstable blood sugar in diabetics fuels a periodontal infection making stabilizing the disease more difficult. Studies suggest that 80% of all diabetics die from heart attack or stroke.

3. *What should I do if I have Periodontal Disease?*

Anyone with Periodontal Disease should be screened for diabetes. Additionally, the American Diabetes Association advises screening for everyone aged 40 or older. If other risk factors such as obesity or a family history of diabetes are present, your health care provider may advise screening at a younger age.

4. *What can my dentist do to reduce my risk Periodontal Disease?*

To keep your gums and supporting bone healthy, consult your dentist about appropriate home care as well as an effective schedule of dental cleanings. You may be advised by your dentist to an antimicrobial mouth wash or oral antibiotics. Additionally, your dentist may recommend salivary testing to check for certain oral bacteria and to assess inflammatory and genetic risks.

Your dentist may also be able to order a laboratory blood test to screen for diabetes or use a simple in office screening test for diabetes that requires a small drop of blood to produce an in office result in just minutes. Your dentist may also recommend that you purchase a small inexpensive blood sugar meter (glucometer) and record some daily blood sugar recordings at home.