

# DIABETES EDUCATION:

## ORAL (DENTAL AND MOUTH) HEALTH

### WHY IS ORAL HEALTH IMPORTANT WHEN I HAVE DIABETES?

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When you have diabetes, high blood sugar can affect your entire body, including your teeth and gums. Whether you have Type 1 Diabetes or Type 2 Diabetes, managing your blood sugar level is important. The higher your blood sugar level, the higher your risk of:

- » **Tooth** decay
- » **Early** gum disease (gingivitis)
- » **Advanced** gum disease (periodontitis)
- » **Thrush** (candidiasis)
- » **Dry mouth** (xerostomia)

### HOW CAN I TAKE CONTROL OF MY ORAL HEALTH?

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- » **Make a commitment to manage your diabetes.** Keep track of your blood sugar levels, and follow your doctor's instructions for keeping it within your target range. The better you control your blood sugars, the less likely you are to develop gum disease and other dental and mouth problems.
- » **Floss your teeth at least once a day.** Flossing helps remove plaque between your teeth and under your gum line. If you have trouble getting dental floss through your teeth, use the kind with wax. If it's hard to hold the floss, use a floss holder or disposable dental floss picks.
- » **Schedule regular dental visits.** Visit your dentist at least twice a year for cleanings, X-rays, and checkups.
- » **Brush your teeth at least twice a day.** Brush in the morning, at night and, ideally, after meals and snacks. Use a soft-bristled toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste. Avoid scrubbing too hard, as that can irritate your gums. Consider using an electric toothbrush, especially if you have arthritis or other problems that make it difficult to brush well. Get a new toothbrush at least every three months.
- » **Make sure your dentist knows you have diabetes.** Every time you visit your dentist, remind him or her that you have diabetes. Make sure your dentist knows how to contact the doctor who helps you manage your diabetes, and what medications you take.
- » **Look for early signs of gum disease.** Report any signs of gum disease—including redness, swelling, and bleeding gums—to your dentist. Mention any other signs or symptoms, such as dry mouth, loose teeth, or mouth pain.
- » **Don't smoke.** Smoking increases the risk of serious Diabetes complications, including gum disease and ultimately, loss of your teeth. If you smoke, ask your doctor about options to help you quit.

