

## My toothbrush can help my diabetes? Diabetes and Periodontal Disease

You are probably aware of the major risk factors for diabetes, including genetics, obesity and high blood pressure. However, what you may not realize is that periodontal health is also associated with diabetes. Periodontal disease is a chronic inflammatory disease that affects the gums and bone supporting the teeth, and has been associated with the progression of other diseases such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes. In fact, the relationship between periodontal disease and diabetes is like a two way street: while having diabetes can increase your risk of developing periodontal disease, managing your periodontal disease can help people with diabetes control their blood sugar levels. And considering that diabetes affects nearly 18.2 million Americans, maintaining healthy teeth and gums is more important than ever.

Researchers have found that people with diabetes may be up to four times more likely to develop periodontal disease. Periodontal disease is often considered to be a common complication of diabetes, along with heart disease and problems with vision. Periodontal disease may be more prevalent because people living with diabetes are more susceptible to contracting infections, and therefore may be

more likely to react to the infection caused by bacterial plaque between the teeth and beneath the gums. Those who don't have their diabetes under control are especially at risk: they are even more likely to develop periodontal disease than people who keep their diabetes well-controlled.

Research also suggests that periodontal disease may make it more difficult for people who have diabetes to control their blood sugar. Periodontal disease is often characterized by inflammation in the mouth. This inflammatory reaction can affect how diabetic patients process insulin, and contribute to increased periods of time when the body functions at a dangerously high blood sugar level. Prolonged exposure to high blood sugar levels can greatly increase the risk for diabetic complications. Therefore, it is very important for people with diabetes to maintain healthy teeth and gums through routine tooth brushing and flossing, and regular visits to a dental professional. If you have, or are at risk for periodontal disease, you may want to seek treatment from a periodontist, a dentist with specialized training in the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of periodontal disease.



### Control diabetes with a toothbrush?

If you or someone you know has diabetes, you already understand that it is important for diabetic patients to monitor the status of their disease and keep it under control with diet and exercise. However, maintaining good oral health can also have a significant impact on the control of diabetes. To keep your oral health at its best, be sure to brush your teeth after every meal and before bed, and to floss once every day to remove the plaque between your teeth. Finally, don't forget to see your dental professional at least twice each year! For more information on the connection between periodontal disease and diabetes or to find out your risk of developing periodontal disease, visit [perio.org](http://perio.org).

The American Academy of Periodontology Patient Page is a public service of the AAP and should not be used as a substitute for the care and advice of your personal periodontist. There may be variations in treatment that your periodontist will recommend based on individual facts and circumstances. Call 1-800-FLOSS-EM or visit [perio.org](http://perio.org) for more information on periodontal disease.