



Diabetes

These 3 oral health issues may signal diabetes

Did you know that one in three people with diabetes don't know they have it? Untreated, high blood sugar can threaten your heart, blood vessels, eyes and kidneys. It also affects your mouth. These symptoms could be the first signs that you need to be screened for diabetes:

Bad breath. Diabetes is one of several diseases that can cause bad breath. It may also cause your breath to smell like fruit. This means the body is struggling to throw off excess chemicals.

Dry mouth. People with undiagnosed diabetes may feel extremely thirsty. Dry mouth also may contribute to bad breath and tooth decay.

Sore gums or teeth. Sore, swollen or bleeding gums and sensitive teeth may be early signs of gum disease, which occurs more frequently in people with diabetes.

If you're concerned about oral health issues like these, be proactive. Make an appointment with your dentist or doctor, and ask about screenings to identify diabetes.

Sources: Academy of General Dentistry, National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse, Medline Plus Medical Encyclopedia, American Dental Association

Trivia time:

What is the best time of day for diabetics to see the dentist?

Answer: In the morning, when blood sugar levels tend to be under better control.

Your dentist can help diagnose diabetes

The symptoms of diabetes may be subtle, making it harder to identify early. Dentists could help correct this pattern, though. People with diabetes often have problems with their teeth and gums, since elevated blood sugar helps bacteria thrive in the mouth.

Sharing your medical history with your dentist, and telling them about any family members with gum disease, could help them assess whether you're at risk for diabetes. If so, they might steer you to a doctor for help.

Sources: American Dental Association, American Diabetes Association, American Academy of Periodontology

Give your teeth extra TLC if you have diabetes

If you have diabetes, it's important to take care of your mouth. That's because people with diabetes are at risk for mouth infections, especially gum disease. Follow these steps to keep your mouth healthy:

- Control your blood sugar.
- Brush and floss every day.
- Visit your dentist regularly, and let them know you have diabetes.
- Quit smoking, since it makes gum disease worse.
- Tell your dentist if your dentures don't fit, or if your gums feel sore.

Source: National Institutes of Health

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