



Diabetes

As the fifth deadliest disease in the United States, diabetes is one of our nation's heaviest health burdens. The American Diabetes Association estimates that nearly 21 million children and adults in America are living with diabetes, either diagnosed (15 million) or undiagnosed (six million). An additional 41 million Americans are believed to be pre-diabetic, according to the American Diabetes Association.

Diabetes creates a heavy economic burden for Americans as well. Total costs associated with diabetes in the United States are in excess of \$132 billion annually, including \$92 billion in direct medical costs and \$40 billion in indirect costs resulting from disability, work loss and premature mortality. Individual costs are directly related to the extent and complications of the condition.

The relationship between diabetes and oral health, specifically periodontal disease, is well accepted in the medical and dental communities. Observational studies have consistently reported evidence of a greater prevalence, incidence, severity, extent or progression of periodontal disease in diabetics. These studies also show that diabetic patients experience periodontal destruction at an earlier age than non-diabetic individuals. Diabetes represents an increased risk for periodontal disease by a factor of 2.1 to 3.0.

Beyond the established role of diabetes worsening periodontal disease, many researchers believe that severe periodontal disease increases the severity of diabetes and complicates metabolic control. A number of studies have shown that treatment of periodontal disease improves glycemic control. The association between the elimination of periodontal infection and improved glycemic control in diabetic patients lends support to the theory that diabetes increases periodontal disease incidence and severity, and severe periodontal disease increases the severity of diabetes and complicates metabolic control.

With Delta Dental of Illinois' Smile Smart for Your Health Enhanced Benefits Program, diabetics can receive four periodontal maintenance visits per year or two periodontal maintenance visits and two general cleanings per year.

Your Dentist & Early Detection of Diabetes

It might come as a surprise to you that early diagnosis of the diabetes often comes from a dentist. In fact, an estimated 120 physical and mental illnesses can be detected and treated by an exam of the mouth, throat and neck. In addition to diabetes, other examples include bulimia, AIDS, heart disease, oral cancer, nutritional disorders and periodontal disease. More than 90 percent of systemic diseases have oral manifestations, which means dentists may often be the first doctor to catch symptoms.

- Early detection of diabetes is important because when left untreated, diabetes can lead to a number of serious health complications, including kidney disease, heart disease, stroke, nerve damage, blindness and even death.
- A routine oral exam can help identify health problems like diabetes because the mouth can offer clear-cut signals that the disease is present. Once diagnosed, diabetics can seek much-needed treatment.
- Controlling sugar levels can help control diabetes. Treating periodontal disease and reducing bacteria in the body are also important in the overall management of diabetes.
- Dentists are on the lookout for some tell-tale signs, apparent during dental checkups, that the disease is present. Your dentist should be able to provide additional information and guidance on this topic.

Good Oral Health Important to Overall Health

It's important to remember that dentists are there to do more than take care of your smile. Routine trips to the dentist can lead to early detection and management of a serious disease, like diabetes.