



Diabetes?

Good oral health can lower your medical bills.

Research over the past 20 years suggests that serious gum disease can complicate diabetes. Luckily, quality dental coverage and a regular dental regimen are simple, preventive measures proven to keep gum and periodontal disease from worsening diabetes.¹

Without regular dental checkups, people with diabetes face increased risks of:

- **Infections.** Since diabetes compromises the immune system, diabetics may be prone to developing fungal and other infections.
 - › For patients facing extensive oral surgery, dentists often prescribe antibiotics to minimize the risk of infections.
 - › Controlling blood glucose levels before, during and after surgery can also help the healing process.
- **Thrush and burning mouth and/or tongue.** People with diabetes who frequently take antibiotics to fight infections are especially prone to developing thrush — a fungal infection of the mouth and tongue. This fungus can thrive on high sugar levels in the saliva of people with uncontrolled diabetes.
- **Dry mouth.** Uncontrolled diabetes can decrease saliva flow, leading to dry mouth. As a result, diabetics may experience soreness, ulcers, tooth decay or mouth infections.²



A University of Michigan study used insurance claim data to prove that appropriate dental cleanings reduced medical costs directly related to diabetes by 14–19 percent.⁴

The good news? Preventive oral hygiene is proven effective.

Preventing and treating gum disease and other conditions in people with diabetes can help keep blood sugar levels in check. Receiving good dental care can also help you look and feel better — while saving money.³

You can prevent dental problems associated with diabetes by:

- Informing your dentist that you have diabetes
- Controlling blood glucose levels
- Seeing your dentist at least twice a year
- Getting regular cleanings
- Brushing your teeth twice a day for about two minutes each time
- Using floss at least once per day — ask your dentist or hygienist to show you how
- Coordinating care between your periodontist, general dentist and personal physician if you are a severe diabetic or have periodontal disease
- Following dietary instructions⁵

If you are one of the 75% of diabetics with gingivitis or severe gum disease,⁶ you should consider a comprehensive dental insurance plan. It can not only save you money, but can improve your health too. CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield and CareFirst BlueChoice, Inc. have a range of dental plans to fit your needs. Visit www.carefirst.com to learn more.

¹ American Diabetes Association. *Living with Diabetes—Oral Health and Hygiene*. Accessed December 17, 2013 at: <http://www.diabetes.org/living-with-diabetes/treatment-and-care/oral-health-and-hygiene/diabetes-and-oral-health.html>

² WebMD.com. *Dental care and diabetes*. Accessed December 17, 2013 at: <http://diabetes.webmd.com/dental-health-dental-care-diabetes>

³ American Dental Association. *Diabetes and Teeth*. Accessed December 17, 2013 at: <http://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/d/diabetes>.

⁴ Managed Dental Care. *Diabetic cost cutting linked to consistent oral care*. February 2009.

⁵ Mayo staff, Mayo Clinic. *Diabetes and dental care: Guide to a healthy mouth*. Accessed December 16, 2013 at: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/diabetes/DA00013>.

⁶ Iacopino AM. *Periodontitis and diabetes interrelationships: role of inflammation*. *Ann Periodontol*. 2001;6:125-137.