



Family & Cosmetic Dentistry

by Dr. Mary Jane Hanlon

Are you at risk for Diabetes? Your mouth may have some clues.

Approximately 17 million people in the United States have diabetes. According to the American Diabetes Association, one third of them are unaware that they have the disease.

Diabetes is a chronic disease in which the body can no longer produce or use insulin properly. Insulin helps convert certain foods into energy such as sugar and starches. There are three major types of diabetes: Type 1, Type 2, and Gestational. Ninety to Ninety-five percent of diabetics suffer from Type 2 Diabetes. With the onset usually occurring after age 45, baby boomers are at high risk.

Consumer surveys show 75% of the general population, don't know bad breath and bleeding gums are often a strong indicator of diabetes. Dentists are key overall health care partners and can play an important role in early detection of diabetes. Oral symptoms related to diabetes such as bad breath, bleeding gums and dry mouth, can cause increased tooth decay. Receding gums occur more frequently in moderate and poorly controlled diabetic patients because plaque responds differently in diabetics.

Also, diabetics are more susceptible to oral infections and periodontal disease than those who do not have diabetes. Oral infections tend to be more severe in diabetic patients than non-diabetic patients,

making the dentist important in the detection and treatment of the disease. In addition, diabetics who do not have good control over their blood sugar levels tend to have more oral health problems.

Take preventive measure for early detection:

- Pay attention to the oral health symptoms that may occur in the mouth, as they can indicate diabetes.
- Discuss concerns about oral and overall health with the dentist. Any changes in dental conditions may indicate or aggravate other health problems.
- Provide the dentist with updates to current changes in medical history.
- Visit the dentist every six months.

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