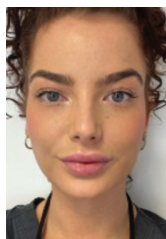




Diabetes and Gum Disease



By Jade Jessop,
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Gum disease is the sixth most prevalent health condition worldwide. It begins when plaque (a sticky film of bacteria) builds up along the

gumline. If not removed through regular brushing and flossing, along with routine hygiene appointments, plaque can irritate the gums and lead to inflammation and bleeding. In its early stage, this condition is known as gingivitis. The gums may appear red, swollen, and may bleed easily during brushing or flossing. Fortunately, gingivitis is reversible with no damage to the bone and can be controlled through good oral hygiene and regular dental care.

If left untreated, gingivitis can progress to a more serious condition called periodontitis. At this stage, bacteria and inflammation can cause the gums to pull away from the teeth, forming pockets where bacteria accumulate. Eventually, this can affect the bone and connective tissue that hold the teeth in place. Periodontitis can lead to gum recession, loose teeth, and even tooth loss. It's a chronic condition that is not reversible, but can be managed and stabilised with correct oral hygiene and often involves more extensive professional treatment.

What many people do not know is that gum disease can also affect overall health, particularly in individuals living with diabetes. This is largely due to the body's reduced ability to fight infection and manage inflammation when blood sugar levels are

high. The relationship goes both ways. Research shows that untreated gum disease can make it more difficult for people with diabetes to control their blood sugar. Poorly controlled blood sugar can lead to increased glucose levels in the saliva, which can feed the bacteria and promote plaque formation. Therefore, maintaining good oral health may help improve long term outcomes for people living with diabetes.

Top Tips for Excellent Oral Hygiene:

- Brush last thing at night and at least one other time during the day.
- Use proper brushing techniques, making sure to clean along the gumline.
- Use the right amount of fluoride for your age and dental risk.
- Choose the most appropriate interdental aid: dental floss, interdental brushes, or a water flosser.
- Use a tongue scraper to remove bacteria from the surface of the tongue.

The Maltings Dental Practice is currently supporting a research trial into the detection of diabetes. For patients of the practice (over 40-year-olds) we are offering a quick test when it is convenient. If this is something of interest, please do ask when you are next in.



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