

ONLINE RESOURCES AT YOUR FINGERTIPS, DAY OR NIGHT!

Aetna gives you the tools you need to manage your dental care and access the dental health information that matters most to you — 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Visit www.aetna.com to take advantage of these valuable online resources.

DENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION WEBSITE

Simple Steps To Better Dental Health[®], our Aetna IntelliHealth[®] dental site, is a premier dental health information resource provided in association with Columbia University's School of Dental and Oral Surgery. The site includes information on more than 55 dental conditions and treatments, an "Ask the Dentist" feature, and much more. To visit the dental site from www.aetna.com:

- Go to Members and Consumers
- Click on Health Information
- Click on Dental Health
- Link to Simple Steps To Better Dental Health (www.simplestepsdental.com)

AETNA NAVIGATOR™ WEBSITE

Aetna Navigator, our easy-to-use website, allows members to perform a variety of self-service functions. Members can change their primary care dentist, request ID cards, send e-mail inquiries to Member Services and access electronic Explanation of Benefits (EOB) quickly and easily.

DOCFIND® ONLINE PROVIDER DIRECTORY

Find a local general dentist or specialist for you and your family. Visit DocFind, which is updated three times per week. We'll even provide you with directions from Maps On Us[®].

You can search for a dentist by name, specialty, zip code, miles willing to travel, city and state, or county and state to easily locate participating providers.

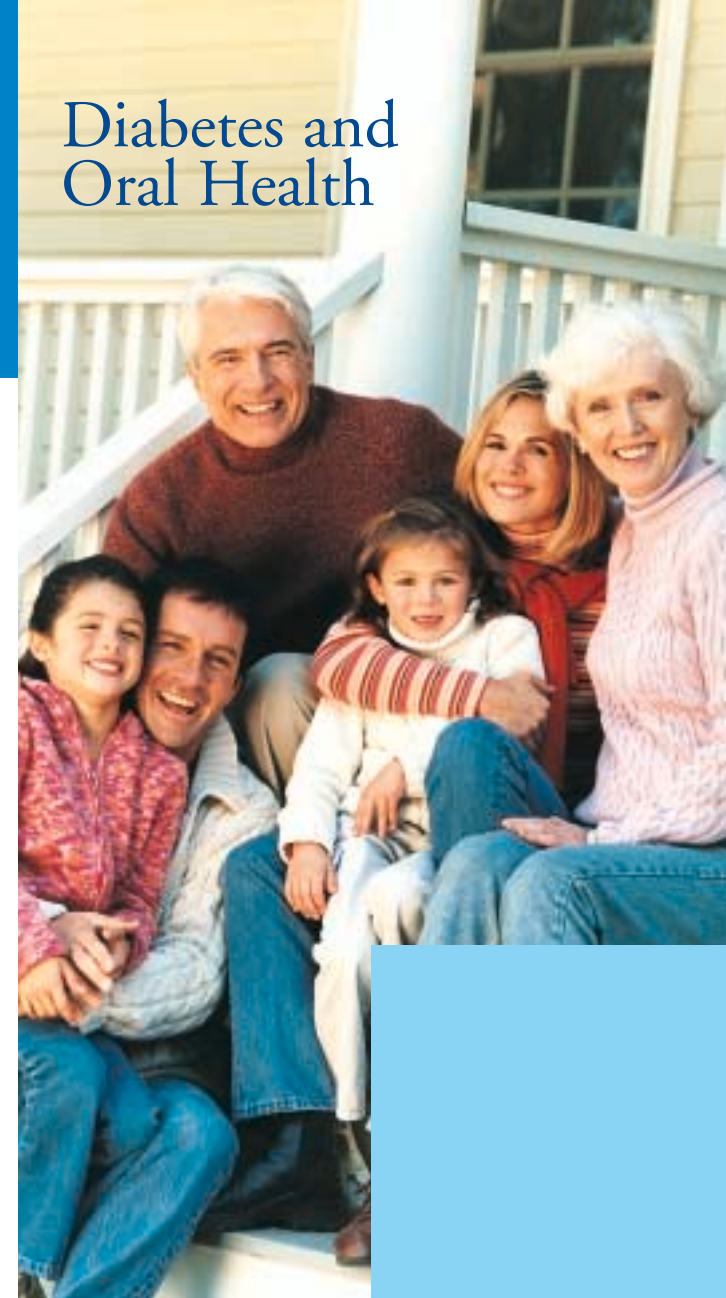
Aetna members can also contact Member Services at the toll-free number on their ID card for assistance finding a participating dentist or to request a paper directory.

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Diabetes and Oral Health



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FACT: Diabetics have a higher-than-normal risk for gum (periodontal) problems. Poor blood glucose control makes gum problems more likely. At Aetna, we know how important it is for you to understand what you can do to maintain good dental health. We want to share with you some important information so you can make better-informed decisions when it comes to your diabetes and your oral health.

Diabetes and Periodontal (Gum) Disease: Controlling blood sugar levels is important

Good diabetic control is the best protection against gum (periodontal) disease. People with poor blood sugar control get gum disease more often and more severely and may lose more teeth than people in good control of their blood sugar levels. Diabetics who have well-controlled blood sugar levels generally have no more periodontal disease than those who do not have diabetes.

How Does Periodontal Disease Develop?

Gum disease is an infection of the tissues that hold the teeth in place. Plaque builds and hardens under the gums, causing the gums to become inflamed. The infection may lead to loss of the bone around the teeth and can lead to tooth loss. There are often no warning signs of early gum disease. Symptoms such as pain, abscess and loosening of the teeth do not occur until the disease is in its advanced stages.

What Are the Warning Signs?

Gum disease is often painless; therefore, you may not know you have it until you have some serious damage. Plan a visit to your dentist if you have any of the following warning signs:

- Bleeding gums when you brush or floss. Even if your gums don't hurt, get them checked.
- Red, swollen or tender gums.
- Gums that have pulled away from teeth. Part of the tooth's root may show, or your teeth may look longer.
- Pus between the teeth and gums (when you press on the gums).
- Bad breath.

- Permanent teeth that are loose or moving away from each other.
- Changes in the way your teeth fit when you bite.
- Changes in the fit of partial dentures.

What Treatment Is Available?

Gum disease may be treated by deep cleaning to remove the hardened plaque below the gum line. This is called scaling and root planing. Gum surgery may be needed when gum disease is very advanced. The surgery consists of the dentist cleaning out the infected area under the gum, then reshaping the bone around the teeth.

Treatment is successful only if the patient regularly brushes and flosses to keep the plaque from building up again.

What Other Mouth Problems May Diabetics Experience?

Oral infections. An oral infection is a cluster of germs that invades an area of your mouth. Some of the warning signs of an oral infection are:

- Swelling or pus around your teeth or gums or any place in your mouth. Swelling can be large or small.
- Pain in the mouth or sinus area that doesn't go away.
- White or red patches on your gums, tongue, cheeks or the roof of your mouth.
- Pain when chewing.
- Teeth that hurt when you eat something hot or cold or when you chew.
- Dark spots or holes on your teeth.

Fungal infections. When you have diabetes, you are more prone to fungal infections such as thrush because the fungus thrives on high glucose levels in saliva. Smoking and wearing dentures can also contribute to fungal infections. Medication is available to treat this infection; however, good diabetic control, no smoking and removing and cleaning dentures daily can prevent thrush. Infections can make your blood glucose hard to control.

Poor healing. If your diabetes is poorly controlled, you heal more slowly and increase your chance of infection. For example, by keeping your blood glucose under control before, during and after any scheduled dental procedure, you will increase your chances for a better recovery.

Dry mouth. Some diabetics complain of dry mouth. This may be caused by some of the medicines you take. Dry mouth can increase the risk of cavities because there is less saliva to wash away germs and take care of the acids they create. If you are taking medications, let your doctor or dentist know if your mouth feels dry. You may be able to try a different drug or use an "artificial saliva" to keep your mouth moist. Also, try drinking more fluids or chewing sugar-free gum or sugar-free candy to help keep the saliva flowing.

What Is the Recommended Home Care?

Allow about three minutes of brushing to clean all your teeth. Brush at least twice a day with a soft toothbrush. You should also floss once a day or as recommended by your dentist. Flossing cleans away plaque and bits of food from between your teeth and below the gum line. It gets places your brush can't reach. Also ask your dentist if you would benefit from a fluoride rinse to help prevent decay.

If you wear full or partial dentures, clean your dentures daily. Be sure to remove stains and plaque that may build up and irritate your gums. Also remember to take your dentures out when you sleep to help your gum tissue stay healthy.

What Dental Visit Considerations Are There for the Diabetic?

Visit your dentist regularly and tell your dentist you have diabetes. Let the dentist know if you have problems with infection or trouble keeping your blood glucose under control.

- Eat before you go to see your dentist. The best time for dental work is when your blood glucose level is on the high side and your insulin action is low.
- Take your normal medications before your dentist visit, unless your dentist or doctor tells you differently.
- Follow your normal meal plan after dental work. If you can't chew well, plan ahead to make sure you meet your nutritional needs.
- If your blood glucose is poorly controlled and you are scheduled to have dental surgery, talk with your dentist to determine if postponing the surgery may be appropriate for your situation.