Diabetes and Oral Health

"Oral health" refers to the health of your mouth, teeth and gums. Because diabetes can affect your oral health, taking care of both your oral health and your diabetes can help prevent problems with your gums and teeth.

What is periodontal disease (PD)?

Periodontal disease (PD) is an infection that damages the bone and gums around your teeth. It is the most common oral problem in people with diabetes. High glucose levels in the fluid around teeth and under the gums increase your chance of having PD. One type of PD is gingivitis, in which bacteria build up between teeth and gums, leading to inflammation. Inflammation may increase your risk of heart disease. Untreated, gingivitis can worsen and cause loss of bone, gum collapse and possible loss of teeth.

Common Signs of PD:

- Bleeding gums
- Swollen, dark red gums
- Teeth shifting, moving, separating, or loosening
- Breath not remaining fresh after brushing and flossing
- Gums that have pulled away from the teeth
- Change in the way your teeth close when biting down
- Family history of early, unexplained tooth loss

See your healthcare provider or dentist if you have any of the above symptom

How Does Diabetes Affect Oral Health?

- Diabetes can make it harder for your body, including your gums, to fight off infections.
- Poorly controlled blood glucose levels can cause the following oral problems:
    - Gingivitis or periodontitis
    - Tooth loss
    - Thrush, a fungal infection in the mouth
    - Dry mouth
- Gum disease may be more difficult to treat when you have diabetes.
- PD can increase blood glucose levels and increase the amount of insulin that you need
- Uncontrolled diabetes can lead to further PD

How Can You Keep Your Mouth, Teeth and Gums Healthy?

- Try to keep your A1C and blood glucose levels within your target range.
- See your dentist at least a twice a year and make sure your dentist knows you have diabetes.
- Brush your teeth twice a day and floss once a day.
- Be physically active and eat healthy.
- Stop smoking, if you do smoke.