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HOW DOES DIABETES AFFECT ORAL HEALTH? :

FOR DR. ROZE BIOHEALTH CLINICS | FRIDAY April 29TH. 2022

BIOHEALTH

Patients with diabetes are more likely to have oral health problems such as cavities, gum infections and problems with jaw bones. As you age, these risks become even more profound. You will need to be much more vigilant about taking care of your teeth if you suffer from diabetes.

Also, controlling your diabetes and your blood sugar levels will greatly help to protect your teeth and gums which will in turn help manage your diabetes.

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1/- Symptoms



You should always be careful to notice any changes in your oral condition. First of all, be on the look out for sore or bleeding gums, mouth infections or bad breath that you cannot control. These problems may be due to any of the following problems:

- **Gingivitis** – is the most common oral health problem for people suffering from diabetes. It is the first stage of gum disease when bacteria builds up causing your gums to swell and bleed. When your diabetes is not controlled, you have more sugar in your saliva thus more bacteria in your mouth.
- **Periodontitis** -- If left untreated, gingivitis can turn into periodontitis, a much more serious type of gum disease. This disease can lead to bone and tissue erosion and possibility loss of teeth. Sugar-loving bacteria can cause plaque and without care, this plaque can build-up and cause gums to pull away from the teeth, creating pockets for more and more bacteria to access.

You cannot cure periodontitis by deciding to brush and floss your teeth better. You will need to see your dentist and/or a periodontist. In some cases, gum surgery is required to save teeth.

- **Dry mouth** -- As you get older, your saliva production decreases slightly, however it is much more profound in people with diabetes, especially for women. A reduction in saliva can put you at risk of dry mouth, a condition also known as xerostomia. Saliva is necessary for producing the enzymes that attack the bacteria in your mouth which causes cavities and gum disease.

You may also find dry mouth can lead to mouth ulcers.

- **Thrush** -- High levels of sugar in your mouth also produce higher levels of fungi which can lead to the fungal yeast infection called Thrush. People with diabetes are more likely to experience such infections in their mouths.

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You may experience the common white or red patches on your tongue, gums and cheeks due to Thrush – sometimes leading to ulcers. Thrush is also more common in people who wear dentures, smoke or take antibiotics.



With diabetes, you may find that both infections and ulcers take much longer to heal. Doing your best to avoid infections and any problems with your mouth will go a long way to keeping your oral and general health in good condition.



2/- What can you do?



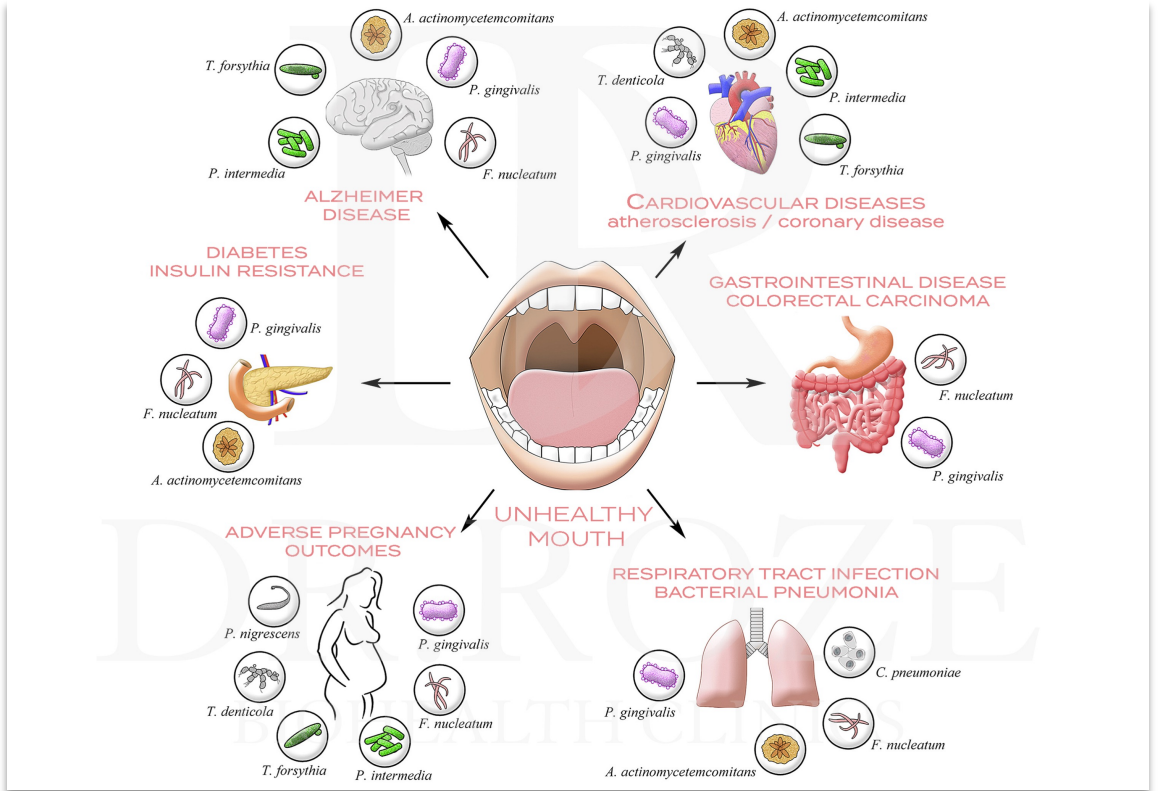
Well, of course take care that your blood sugar levels are always maintained. It is a vicious cycle - high blood sugar can cause mouth infections - mouth infections can make it hard to control blood sugar levels. You will need to be vigilant with your health and follow the good oral healthcare practices to keep your mouth healthy if you have diabetes:



- Brush your teeth with a sonic toothbrush that has soft bristles at least 2x daily.
- Floss correctly (if you don't know how, talk to your hygienist and she/he will show you the correct method) at least 1x each day before bed.
- Wait at least 30 minutes after eating before you brush to protect tooth enamel.
- Wait at least 30 minutes after brushing or mouthwash before eating again to make sure these products can do their job.
- For denture-wearers, remove them at night (don't sleep in them) and make sure to clean them thoroughly each day.
- If you smoke, quit!

You may need to visit your dentist and hygienist more often than the regular 6 months to make sure your mouth stays healthy and allow the dental specialists to monitor your oral health carefully. Let them know you have diabetes and which medications that your are taking. Also, make sure to inform them if your blood sugar levels are not on track. And remember, it's always much better to solve problems earlier rather than later.

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