



Diabetes

& Dentistry YOU

A Dangerous Cycle Overweight, Gum Disease, & Diabetes

Diabetes is on the rise in the US. Obesity and overweight rates are on the rise. And periodontitis (aka gum disease) is on the rise.

Certainly, it is not true that all people who are overweight will get gum disease and will also get diabetes. But there are some shocking connections that you should know about, especially if you are a person of color.

Consider these statistics from the National Center for Health Statistics:

Diabetes is the **sixth leading cause of death** in the United States

For African Americans, American Indians, Asian/Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics – diabetes is **among the top five causes**.

Some researchers attribute the prevalence of diabetes among people of color to something called the “thrifty gene”, which is a stop along the DNA strand

that causes individuals from certain parts of the world to hold on to fat stores longer than others in order to keep them alive during times of drought or famine. Most researchers agree, fat (more precisely adipose tissue) is linked to insulin resistance, the precursor to diabetes.

Certainly, the thrifty gene may be part of the equation for some ethnic groups. But consider these additional statistics from New York University and the Journal of Periodontology:

Mexican Americans, American Indians and African Americans are more likely to develop periodontitis than people of European descent.

Of all recent U.S. immigrants, those who come from Puerto Rican, Indian, or Haitian backgrounds were much more likely to have periodontitis than immigrants of other backgrounds.

Those researchers theorize that those ethnic populations are more vulnerable to oral bacteria that lead to gum disease, and they have a different response to oral infection and inflammation than people of European descent.

What’s the Connection?

What makes those statistics that seem to so different so inextricably linked is the relationship overweight and obesity, and gum disease have with diabetes.

As mentioned earlier, overweight individuals—specifically those with Body Mass Index of 25 kg/m^2 or more are at an increased risk for diabetes. Body Mass Index (or BMI) a statistical measurement which compares a person's weight and height to determine their ideal weight. Excessive weight, leads to insulin resistance by over-stressing metabolic functions, and they begin to overproduce glucose.

Did you know?

Research over the last 50 years suggests that oral infections may lead to “systemic” damage, leading to insulin resistance, or worsening complications of diabetes (for those already living with diabetes).

According to some researchers, the infection caused by gum disease may lead to insulin resistance in similar fashion, as oral infection leads to inflammation throughout the body, and again overstress metabolic functions.

What's more. Once a person has diabetes, they are 3.4 times more likely to develop gum disease—which may set in motion a cycle of infection, inflammation and uncontrolled blood sugar levels. This dangerous cycle may lead to far worse complications including cardio vascular disease and kidney disease.

The Good News

But there is the good news. You have control over your health, regardless of your risk factors. Studies performed over the last 50 years, have proven that when individuals receive rigorous, professional treatment of periodontal disease, blood sugar levels often become normal—without the need for additional medication.

Still more research from the *Journal of Periodontology* reports that overweight and obesity are “markers” (or red flags) for gum disease and diabetes. In other words, if you have struggled with weight control for a period

of time, regardless of your age, you should visit a physician AND a dentist to get screened for both diseases. In fact, there is a new organization of dentists in the US called *DentistryForDiabetics*SM, who have been trained in the interrelated relationships between diabetes, and oral diseases.

Where to Turn for Help

If you are a person of color, and suspect you may be at risk for diabetes or gum disease contact your physician or a *DentistryForDiabetics* dentist today

www.DentistryForDiabetics.com.



Startling Statistics Overweight, Gum Disease & Diabetes

In 2002, the US National Institute of Health published clinical guidelines to identify, evaluate, and treat adult obesity. Based on those guidelines, an estimated 97 million American adults were classified as overweight or obese. That number has risen to more than 60% of American adults today, and nearly 80% of some high-risk subgroups, such as African-American women.

What may be far more disturbing is that the number of overweight children has more than doubled

among 2- to 5-year-olds and more than tripled among 6- to 11-year-olds.

Approximately 10.4% of children 2- to 5-years-old and 15.3% of children 6- to 11-years-old are overweight.

Reports from American Diabetes Association, Standards of Medical Care in Diabetes-2006, have found treatment standards for diabetes difficult to meet, as evidenced by the following results:

Only 37% of adults with diagnosed diabetes achieved their HbA1c goal (of < 7%)

Only 36% of adult diabetics

met blood pressure goals

Only 48% of adult diabetics met cholesterol goals

Fewer than 7.3% of diabetics achieved all 3 goals

Research into how obesity affects oral health is limited, but what is known is that obesity is a marker for periodontal disease. But the real opportunity may come from collaboration between dentist and physician to inform and treat patients according to the interrelated nature of overweight/obesity rates, periodontal disease, and diabetes—and to collectively help change unhealthy patterns for children and adults.

Oral Health & Treatment:

Individuals with diabetes are 3.4 times more likely to develop periodontal disease than those without diabetes. Once periodontitis is established, metabolic control of diabetes is complicated from the constant reservoir of periodontal pathogens responsible for infection.