



Diabetes & Dentistry YOU

The Baby Boomer Generation Health and Healthcare Risks

There are three things most people know about the Baby Boomer generation.

First, they make up a vast population born in the 20 years following WWII. Second, the youngest of them is now in middle age. Third, they stand to bankrupt the US (and world) health systems due to age-related diseases such as diabetes and heart disease (a frightening prospect, given the economic state of today).

But when it comes to this last point, history hasn't been written yet – not for the individual, and not for the healthcare system.

Of the age-related diseases, closely-linked diseases diabetes and heart disease are two of the most prevalent—but they may also be the most preventable. Both can be managed to a large degree through innovations in medicine and pseudo-surgical techniques such as out-patient angioplasty.

That's all well and good, but as

mentioned above, healthcare costs are teetering on a quickly-crumbling economic cliff above a wide abyss. So relying on expensive medical solutions to treat a large-scale, largely preventable disease is not a good bet (see Chrysler, sub-prime investors, or Canadian healthcare for clarification).

So before we get too far down that path, let's consider preventive solutions. Eating a balanced diet and exercising regularly are proven ways people of all ages can increase heart strength and manage their weight. The problem is that if you are predisposed to these killer diseases by way of ethnicity or family history, your chances of developing diabetes and heart disease are higher—regardless of how much you exercise or how little “bad” cholesterol you consume. Excess weight and tobacco use also increase your risk for these diseases. And all of these “risks” become multiplied once you pass 40.

According to the American Heart Association:

Scientific studies have found that the higher the a marker of inflammation is, **the higher the risk of having a heart attack.**

In fact, the risk for heart attack in people in the upper third of hs-CRP levels has been determined to be twice that of those whose hs-CRP level is in the lower third.

Know Your Risk Factors

So the point is that understanding your risk factors is key to preventing onset of both heart disease and diabetes. But there is also one more risk factor that can have a huge affect on whether you develop and/or manage diabetes and heart disease.

Did you know?

According to the American Diabetes Association, only 37 percent of adults with diagnosed diabetes achieved an A1C of 7%

Approximately 24 million Americans currently have diabetes. Another 57 million are at risk of developing it.

— National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

Oral Health Linked to Diabetes, Heart Disease

According Dr. Charles Martin, DDS, founder of DentistryForDiabeticsSM, oral health has been linked to both heart disease and diabetes. Beginning with research as far back as 1954, study after study has found four common links between oral health, diabetes and heart disease:

1. Gum disease (periodontitis) has been shown to contribute to insulin resistance (the first step towards diabetes)
2. People with gum disease are 270% more likely to suffer a heart attack
3. Diabetic patients are up to 3.4 times more likely to develop gum disease than non-diabetic subjects
4. When patients with diabetes are treated for oral infection, blood glucose levels often normalized (without additional medications)

According to Martin, “Not only can treating gingival or periodontal infection help normalize blood sugar (and help prevent insulin resistance

or support good diabetes management),” says Martin. “Healthy teeth and gums affect what patients are able to eat and how they feel about themselves.”

Gum Disease Moves Quickly

Patients already living with diabetes know that eating a balanced diet rich in fiber is one key to managing glucose. But if those patients don’t take proper care of their teeth and gums, a slight case of gingivitis can quickly erupt into advanced stages of periodontal disease (due to inhibited immune response and poor wound healing associated with diabetes).

That translates into loosening teeth and sometimes complete tooth loss – making it difficult to eat the kinds of foods that help manage diabetes and prevent heart disease. But let’s be honest, missing teeth also affect the way people feel about themselves (both men and women). As one dentist observed, missing teeth may not be attractive, but more than that, they also signal a physical decline in the body that can overwhelm the individual and make it harder to face an already frightening disease.

Oral Treatment May Save \$\$

From a financial perspective, visiting a dentist certified in diabetic care twice a year for thorough cleaning and blood glucose check is far less costly

than developing a life threatening disease like diabetes and associated heart disease.

Some health insurance companies agree. In 2008, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan decided to add some preventive dental care to some of their health insurance plans because it makes good financial sense. According to Carl Stoel, DDS, a senior dental consultant at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, “So far, we’ve found that when diabetic patients are good dental patients, there’s a substantial savings on the medical side.”

Specifically, cost-analysis by Blue Cross Blue Shield found savings between 3% to 8% for those patients with regular dental care – cost savings connected to diabetes-related complications including peripheral vascular disease, coronary heart disease, congestive heart failure, cardiovascular disease, and chronic kidney disease. That may add up to millions of dollars in potential savings for the American healthcare system, but it also gives Baby Boomers (and people of all ages living with or at risk for diabetes and heart disease) a healthy, low-cost alternative to living with diabetes.

To learn more about oral health, diabetes and heart disease, visit www.DentistryForDiabetics.com

Oral Health & Treatment:

Research shows that when gum disease is treated both locally and systemically, C-Reactive Protein levels fall significantly.