



# Diabetes & Dentistry YOU

## Diabetic Patients May Pay Less in Health Costs According to at Least One Health Insurer

**Did you know diabetic patients, who visited a dentist regularly, paid less last year in health care costs than those diabetic individuals who did not see a dentist?**

A study begun in 2008 by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan (in conjunction with University of Michigan School of Dentistry) found that diabetic patients, who received regular, preventive dental and periodontal care, saved between 3-8% in diabetes-related health care costs. Those costs were linked to peripheral vascular disease, coronary heart disease, congestive heart failure, cardiovascular disease, and chronic kidney disease.\* All very real complications of diabetes mellitus.

The implication is that those patients who practice regular, preventive oral care may suffer less of those diseases, and/or their treatments may be less extensive and costly.

What's more, based on those

findings, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan is now incorporating preventive dental services into some of their medical plans. Good news for those with diabetes mellitus, who want to lower their out-of-pocket costs and perhaps boost their health.

But there is one obstacle standing in the way of all this positive diabetes-prevention momentum, and it's not what you might expect.

The truth is that the biggest obstacle to taking advantage of preventive dental treatment related diabetes may be paperwork.

It seems physicians and dentists use very different patient records systems. Which is perhaps understandable when you consider that diabetic care doctors have traditionally focused on the internal workings of the body from neck to toes, while dentists focused on the oral cavity.

But now there is further proof that diseases of the mouth (especially those that trigger ongoing

**“There are significant data now to support that if a person has diabetes and they also have periodontal disease that is left untreated, it is very difficult to gain glycemic control of that patient,”**

— Dr Maria Ryan, DDS, PhD,  
Professor of Oral Biology and  
Pathology, and Director  
of Clinical Research  
School of Dental Medicine, Stony  
Brook University, NY

infection, such as periodontal disease and candidiasis) affect the overall health of the person with diabetes. It may be time break down this barrier to preventive oral treatment for the person with diabetes.

*DentistryForDiabetics*<sup>SM</sup> thinks so. They have created a common system for patient information

### Did you know?

The American Diabetes Association is now recommending that individuals with diabetes mellitus visit a dentist at least once a year.

sharing, which can be used not only by doctors and dentists, but by dietitians, podiatrists, cardiologists – virtually any healthcare practitioner focused on diabetic care.

The goal of the information-sharing system is to enable a complete, collaborative network of health care providers to work toward the common goal of overall

### How can gum diseases affect overall health?

According to George Taylor, DrPH, DMD, initial periodontal infection affects the health of the teeth and gums. But the body's response to infection (especially in the diabetic individual) is systemic. Local infections do not remain local because they trigger a response from one, single contiguous immune system.

diabetic patient health.

More good news for those with diabetes.

To learn more about the *DentistryForDiabetics* patient information system, visit [www.DentistryForDiabetics.com](http://www.DentistryForDiabetics.com).

\*Tracy Hampton Studies Probe Oral Health Diabetes Link. *Journal of the American Medical Association* 2008. 300(21):2471-2473



## How Chewing Your Food Can Hurt Your Health

very, very bad thing.

You may already be aware that inflammation in the body of the diabetic can

pathways, making ever-more difficult to function normally. Ultimately, this ongoing burden of inflammation may make the diabetic person more vulnerable to many of the classic complications of diabetes (such as cardiovascular disease, retinopathy and kidney disease).

All good reasons to visit a dentist trained in the unique care requirements of the diabetic patient.

More than that, though, those living with diabetes should urge all members of their diabetic care team (from doctors and nurses to dentists and dietitians) to work together to prevent the affects of diabetes.

**In medical terms, it is called masticated release of pro-inflammatory cytokines and pathogens entering leukocytes via periodontal tissue.**

To the rest of us, it means that the infection caused by gum disease can enter your blood stream while you are doing something as mundane as biting into an apple. And for those of us living with diabetes mellitus, that can be a

severely impact blood-glucose management. This is because the body of the diabetic often over-reacts when trying to fight off infection. This exaggerated response can cause blood glucose levels to fall through the floor.

When an infection becomes chronic – as is so often the case with periodontal disease – it slowly works against the body, weakening internal organs, stressing vascular

## Diabetes & Health:

Like NIDDM, the risk of developing periodontal disease grows with age. According to research, more than half adults living in the United States, who are over the age of 35, are already in the early stages of periodontal disease.