

Diabetes study reveals despite higher risks most people with diabetes don't change their oral care routines

Diabetes is a disease that affects every part of the body, and for people with unstable blood glucose levels there is a higher risk than normal for developing serious complications from poor oral hygiene. In a study by dLife, the world's largest diabetes community, and SoundView Research, Inc., 66 percent of active diabetes managers had not changed their oral care habits since being diagnosed and over half have not been advised by their dentist to take extra care to brush, floss or rinse daily.

"The results of this study show the gulf that exists between perceptions and the connections between diabetes and oral health. Your dental health absolutely affects the control of your diabetes," says Charles W. Martin, DDS, MAGD, DABOI/ID, DICOL, FIADFE.

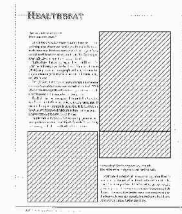
"Inflammation in the mouth coming from gum disease spreads to the whole body. This inflammation increases insulin resistance, cholesterol levels and C-reactive protein levels. So uncontrolled oral disease can be the hidden factor working against those trying to maintain good control over their diabetes."

Eight hundred people with diabetes were surveyed on their knowledge of what they considered "good" daily oral health care. Three-fourths believed their routines to be effective, even though 60 percent reported using floss and rinse less than once a day. More than half of the participants said they went to regular checkups and that their dentists were aware of their diabetes. One in five believed a little bleeding when brushing was okay.

While 78 percent believe that "the mouth is the gateway to infection in the body," there is still a need for more education around diabetes and oral care. Sixty-two percent said they were unsure or disagreed that gingivitis makes it more difficult to control blood sugar levels.

Dr. Martin added that people with diabetes are more likely to have tooth decay problems, dry mouth, bone loss, tooth loss and accelerated oral breakdown compared to those who do not have diabetes.

"As health care providers, people look to us for guidance. We need to give it. Too few people with diabetes



know the dire consequences that can befall them because of just not knowing.”

Through education and the practice of good dental care and oral hygiene habits—brushing and flossing daily and by keeping blood sugar levels under control—infection from gum disease can be reduced or eliminated along with the risk of tooth loss.