

Plan for Health: November 2021



This month's highlights include American Diabetes Month® and The Great American Smokeout®

November is American Diabetes Month!

Every year, communities across the country come together to ring the alarm on the diabetes epidemic. For the millions of us who are at risk for it, it's a time to get educated, find resources and make sure all those around us are aware of their risk, too. And for the millions of people living with diabetes, it's a chance to tell their stories and awaken the world.

Diabetes Overview:

Type 1 Diabetes: In type 1 diabetes, the body does not produce insulin. The body breaks down the carbohydrates you eat into blood sugar (blood glucose) that it uses for energy—and insulin is a hormone that the body needs to get glucose from the bloodstream into the cells of the body. With the help of insulin therapy and other treatments, everyone can learn to manage their condition and live long, healthy lives.

Type 2 Diabetes: Type 2 diabetes is the most common form of diabetes—and it means that your body doesn't use insulin properly. And while some people can control their blood sugar levels with healthy eating and exercise, others may need medication or insulin to help manage it.

Do you think you are at risk for type 2 diabetes? Prediabetes means your blood sugar levels are higher than normal, which can lead to type 2 diabetes. 84 million Americans have prediabetes, and 90% don't know it. Check with your doctor and get tested. If you discover that you do have prediabetes, remember that it doesn't mean you'll develop type 2, particularly if you follow a treatment plan and a diet and exercise routine. Even small changes can have a huge impact on managing diabetes or preventing it all together. Refer to your member website to find out more about Diabetes Prevention Programs available to you through your health plan!

Living with Diabetes? It is very important to manage and control your diabetes. Uncontrolled diabetes can lead to complications that include eye, kidney, and heart disease, and serious infections that can lead to further complications. Keeping your blood sugars at or near normal as well as following an effective treatment plan can help to prevent these serious complications and protect you from further illness.

Routine medical care is part of a successful diabetes management plan. Please talk with your doctor about the care you need. Some important preventive measures for people living with diabetes include A1C testing, an annual diabetic eye exam, an annual complete foot exam, and routine dental exams.

Click [here](#) to learn about how diabetes is diagnosed.

Source:
American Diabetes Association www.diabetes.org

Diabetes and oral health go hand in hand

While most people with diabetes know about the condition's associated risks, such as stroke, eye disease, kidney disease and foot issues, they may be less informed about the important connection between diabetes and oral health. These patients work with many different kinds of health care providers as part of their diabetes care team, and the dentist should be an integral part of this team.

People who are diabetic may have:

- Reduced saliva production: Saliva is needed to clean bacteria from teeth and neutralize harmful acids in the mouth, which can cause tooth decay.
- Rapid bacteria growth: High blood glucose (sugar) increases glucose in saliva, and bad bacteria in the mouth feeds off sugar.
- Increased plaque development: When bacteria combines with food particles and other substances, it can form the soft, sticky stuff on your teeth, called plaque, which is one of the main causes of gum disease.
- Decreased ability to fight and resist infection: With early gum disease (gingivitis), the gums may be red, swollen or bleeding. If it progresses to more severe gum disease, or periodontitis, this can destroy the tissues and bone that hold the teeth in place, eventually causing tooth loss. Periodontitis may impact the body's ability to control blood glucose (sugar) levels, thus making diabetes more difficult to control.

The catch-22

Inflammation, anywhere in the body, can cause blood sugar levels to rise in people with diabetes, and high sugar levels create inflammation. So diabetics with existing gum disease, which is inflammatory in nature, may find that their blood sugar becomes harder to control, and these high sugar levels can cause their gum disease to progress more rapidly. A seemingly impossibly cycle to break, there are management solutions.

Manage diabetes and oral health—together

It's especially important for those with diabetes, or signs of the condition, to keep their mouth, teeth and gums as healthy as possible. Here are some tips that will keep your mouth free of disease and help control your blood-sugar level:

- Practice optimal oral hygiene, brushing twice and flossing once daily.
- Visit your dentist regularly for cleanings and routine check-ups.
- Have an annual comprehensive periodontal examination, so if gum disease is detected in the early stages, it can be reversed and/or treated with either nonsurgical treatment, like scaling and root planing, or more advanced treatments if needed.
- Keep your dentist informed of your glucose levels. Your dentist and your physician may need to collaborate to provide you the best overall care.
- Control blood glucose levels as best as possible.
- Avoid sweets, which aren't good for oral health or diabetes. Keep in mind that even sugar-free varieties may be high in acid, which also can harm teeth and gums.
- Chew sugar-free gum or lozenges to stimulate saliva or use a saliva substitute.

Sources:
Diabetes, Gum Disease, and Other Dental Problems; National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, September 2014
Diabetes and dental care: Guide to a healthy mouth; Mayo Clinic, September 2015
Prevent Diabetes Problems, Keep Your Teeth And Gums Healthy; Colgate Oral Care Center, November 2010

The American Cancer Society Great American Smokeout®

The American Cancer Society Great American Smokeout® is an annual event that encourages and offers support to smokers to make a plan to quit smoking or to quit smoking on the day of the event – the third Thursday in November each year. By quitting – even for one day – smokers will be taking an important step toward a healthier life and reducing their cancer risk. Click [here](#) for more information about the campaign!

Click [here](#) for a flyer about how your body immediately starts recovering after quitting smoking.

Sharecare Featured Challenge

Join the November Gratitude Challenge this month. Complete the challenge certifying that you have reflected on one thing you are grateful for each day for 21 days this month! Join this challenge starting on October 25th by going to mycare.sharecare.com, and clicking Achieve → Challenges → Upcoming and join the challenge.

Plan Ahead: Join us next month for December's health topic: **National Handwashing Awareness Week and Healthy Holiday Tips**