

Taking Care of Your Oral Health

The link between diabetes and oral health

Did you know that your dentist may be able to spot early signs of diabetes? Diabetes is a disease in which the body does not produce or properly use insulin. Insulin is a hormone that carries sugar from foods to your cells, where it's used for the energy you need for daily life.

More than 34 million people in the United States have diabetes, and 1 in 5 people don't know they have it. Early detection is important because without treatment, too much sugar stays in your bloodstream. This can lead to other serious health issues such as heart disease, stroke, nerve damage, kidney disease and vision problems.

How do dentists spot diabetes?

Dentists can play an important role in spotting undiagnosed diabetes and helping to manage the dental effects of the disease. Uncontrolled diabetes can weaken the white blood cells that fight bacterial infections, and also cause blood vessels to thicken. As a result, people with uncontrolled diabetes are more likely to have gum inflammation (gingivitis) and more frequent and severe gum disease (periodontitis).

In addition to gingivitis and gum disease, people with diabetes can have:

Dry mouth

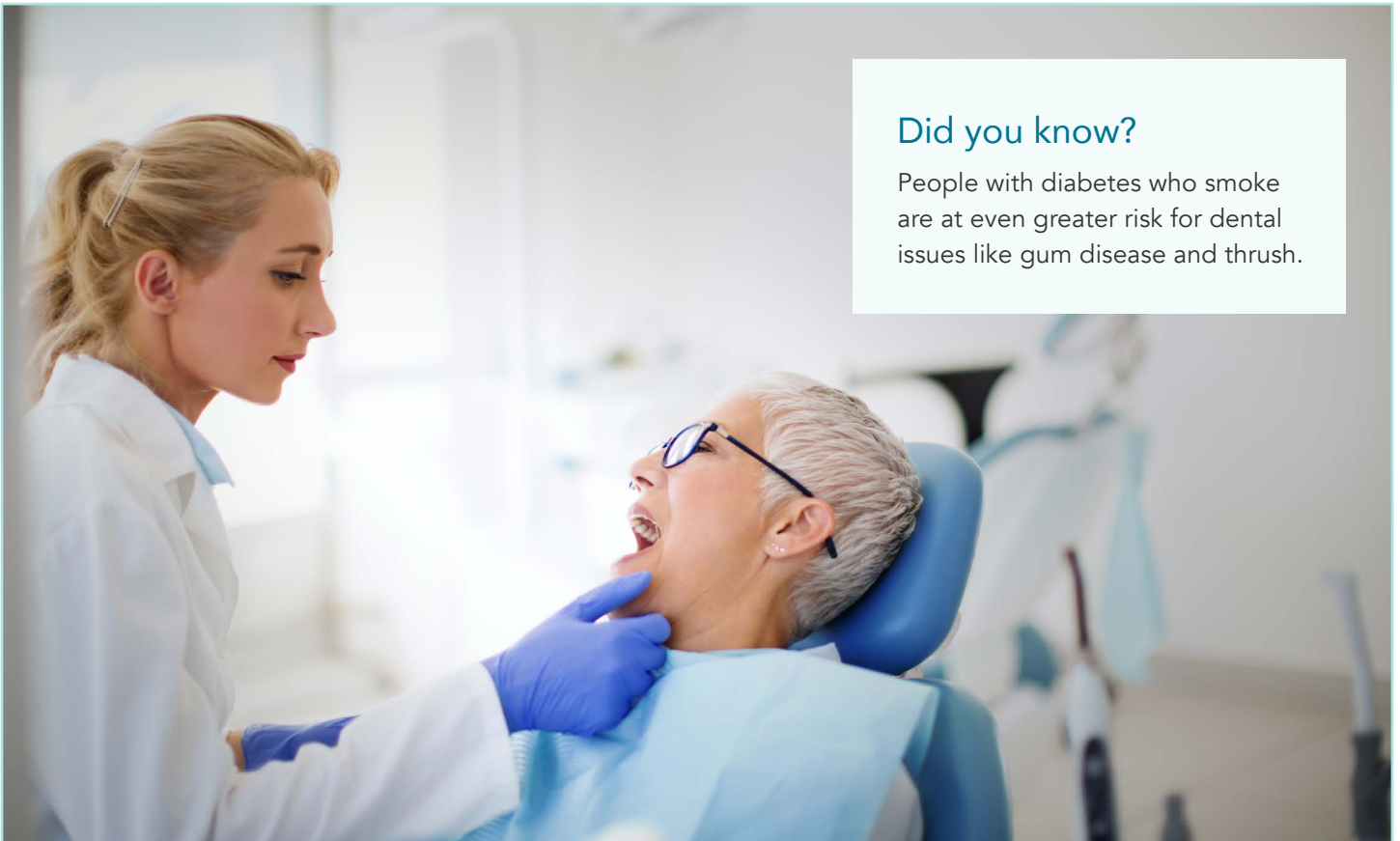
Poor healing of oral tissues after surgery or dental procedures

Thrush, a fungal infection of the mouth and tongue

A burning sensation of the mouth and tongue caused by thrush

Oral health tips:

- Visit your dentist at least twice a year to have your teeth and gums cleaned. If you have diabetes, talk to your dentist about how often you need checkups.
- Brush your teeth after each meal with a soft-bristled toothbrush.
- Floss your teeth daily.
- If you wear dentures, remove and clean them each day.
- Tell your dentist about any changes in your oral health.
- If you smoke, talk to your doctor about ways to quit.



Did you know?

People with diabetes who smoke are at even greater risk for dental issues like gum disease and thrush.

Regular dental checkups help keep you healthy.



Sources: American Dental Association, American Diabetes Association, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Cleveland Clinic

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