



Diabetes

& Dentistry & YOU

The Great American Healthcare Debate What Does it Mean for those with Diabetes?

Will Healthcare become single-payer, wholly public or remain private? Or will it be something different altogether?

Regardless of the outcome of this summer's now-infamous healthcare debate, there is one certainty when it comes to diabetes. Prevention, early diagnosis and management are **better bets than relying the government OR insurance companies** to provide treatment for you – once diabetes has begun to attack your heart, eyes, kidneys and vascular system.

In other words, if you are at risk for diabetes or you're already living with it – now may be the time to change your thinking and take charge of your disease.

Here's what I mean.

According to a study done by Journal of the American Dental Association., 2000, individuals

living with diabetes are less likely to see a dentist regularly for preventive treatment than their healthier counterparts.

And yet, they are 3 – 4 times more vulnerable to oral health complications than systemically healthy people.

When patients with diabetes were asked if they had ever been told by a health care professional they should take extra preventive oral care measures, 67.7% said "No".

What's the problem with that?

According to a 2008 study out of Columbia University (Demmer, Desvarieux, et al), oral disease may **lead to diabetes**. The study compared

9,296 men and women ages 25 – 74 – none of whom had diabetes when the study began. Over time, those who subjects with gum disease developed diabetes at a rate 40%-50% higher than those with health gums. That's significant!

One of the studies lead researchers Ryan T. Demmer, PhD, MPH, is an Associate Research Scientist in the Department of Epidemiology at Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health, is the first to say the connection between oral disease and diabetes needs further study. "One concern we discussed is the potential for diagnostic bias in which individuals with periodontal disease were possibly more likely to be tested for and diagnosed with diabetes," says Demmer. "We feel this is unlikely, but it does remain as a possibility."

But Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan isn't as reserved. As a result of their own 2008 study

Did you know?

It is estimated that 7% of the United States population, or 20.8 million people, have been diagnosed with diabetes (another 5.6 million go undiagnosed).

in collaboration with University of Michigan, the insurer is now including some key oral treatments in their overall health plans.

When asked the reason, Blue Cross Senior Dental Consultant Carl Stoel said, "So far, we've found that when diabetic patients are good dental patients, there's a substantial savings on the medical side."

Worth noting is that the Blue Cross Blue Shield study saw those savings and health improvements in some of the most destructive complications of diabetes – including

peripheral vascular disease, coronary heart disease, congestive heart failure, cardiovascular disease, and chronic kidney disease (first reported in the Journal of the American Medical Association, 2008).

And so we come full circle with a leading insurance company doing more than just giving an approving nod to regular prevent oral treatments – by putting their money where their mouth is.

Here's where it gets sticky, though.

With talks of major healthcare overhauls, and questions be asked by so many about what such change will mean to them personally – perhaps it's time to take charge of your own preventive measures. The first step is to visit your dentist, and ask him or her what sorts of screening and treatments they provide related to diabetes detection and prevention.

To find out more about diabetes and your oral health:



What's the Link Between Gum Disease and

Here's how it works....

Normally, when you develop a local infection, your body goes to

work to fight it off. And the infection is contained. When the body is subjected to ongoing infection, it can become overwhelmed and trigger inflammation that spreads like red wine on the carpet — further and further into the body.

Such inflammation spews something called "cytokines" (proteins secreted by lymph cells that affect cellular activity). Two cytokines in particular, TNF-

alpha and IL 6, may block the cells' ability to communicate with each other in order to regulate insulin levels.

Ultimately, this may lead to insulin resistance and even diabetes.

An infection of the gums, periodontal disease should be of particular concern because as many as 80% of Americans today may have it.

Left untreated, gum disease can advance quickly — creating the perfect storm of ongoing infection and inflammation... And triggers the downward spiral toward diabetes is set in motion.

For those inclined to dismiss oral disease – specifically periodontal disease – as a minor or incidental complication if diabetes, **consider this.**

A growing body of research suggests that diabetes may actually be triggered by inflammation in the body. Such inflammation is often caused by infection. Which means infection in any part of your body may increase your risk for diabetes.

Oral Health & Treatment:

Another 57 million people are at risk of developing diabetes.