

Health Hints

Prevent Diabetes And Improve Oral Health

(NAPSA)—While diabetes affects nearly 26 million Americans and is one of the fastest-growing diseases in the nation, there are ways you can protect yourself. That's particularly important for the 79 million Americans who have prediabetes, which means they are at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

Yet many people are unaware of the prevalence of diabetes. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one-quarter of Americans with diabetes and 90 percent with prediabetes are unaware that they have the disease.

To help curb and control the condition, people should recognize the connection between diabetes and oral health. Researchers have shown a link between gum disease and an array of serious health conditions including diabetes. People with diabetes are up to four times more likely to develop gum disease, according to the National Institutes of Health.

Here are five tips to prevent and treat diabetes and improve oral health:

•**Look for risk factors and warning signs**—Common risk factors for diabetes include high blood pressure, sedentary lifestyle, being overweight or obese, being 45 years old or older or a family history of diabetes. Common warning signs include increased hunger, blurry vision, and tingling or numbness in hands, legs and feet.

•**Identify ways to control the condition**—There are many ways to control diabetes and prediabetes more effectively, including getting active and setting—and meeting—fitness goals, drinking plenty of water, cutting back on high-calorie snack foods and sugar-sweetened drinks, and choosing whole grain foods rather than processed grain products.



The millions of Americans with diabetes and prediabetes should not delay treatment and should pay particular attention to having healthy teeth and gums.

•**Improve oral health**—Practice good oral hygiene, including brushing and flossing daily, as well as using an oral rinse. Research shows that reducing oral inflammation can lower blood-sugar levels for people with diabetes and even help enhance their overall health.

•**Visit your dentist**—Frequent visits to the dentist are also important, including for preventive services and treating gum disease. In fact, people with diabetes who got dental care had annual net medical claims that were much lower than people living with diabetes who did not receive that type of care, according to a recent study from UnitedHealthcare.

•**Seek support**—There are resources available to help prevent and manage diabetes. For instance, the YMCA's Diabetes Prevention Program is a 16-week group lifestyle intervention program that helps people reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes. A list of locations is available at www.ymca.net/diabetes-prevention.

For more information, visit www.unitedhealthgroup.com/Diabetes/Default.aspx.

Note to Editors: While Diabetes Awareness Month is in November, this release can be useful to your readers at any time.