Gum Disease and Diabetes

Gum disease is an inflammation (swelling) of the gums that damages soft tissues and destroys bone. This can cause teeth to become loose and eventually fall out.

How does diabetes affect your mouth?
- Increases the amount of plaque (sticky film that forms on your teeth every day)
- Causes your gums to bleed more easily
- Makes it easier to get an infection and harder to heal
- Leads to dry mouth that causes sores in your mouth
- Causes bad breath

How does gum disease affect your diabetes?
- Raises your blood sugar which can make it more difficult to control your diabetes
- Puts you at risk for other problems related to diabetes, such as in your heart, eyes, or kidneys

Stages of Gum Disease: Diabetes can speed up this process

Healthy
- pink gums
- no bleeding

Early Stage
- gums are red, swollen and may bleed easily
- reversible

Moderate Stage
- early stage of bone loss
- sometimes only visible with radiographs
- irreversible damage to gums and bone

Advanced Stage
- teeth become loose and can fall out
- teeth appear longer

What can you do?
- Keep your blood sugar at the target levels set by your health care provider
- Avoid tobacco (smoking, chewing, vaping, etc.) because this can make diabetes and gum disease worse
- Limit sugars and alcohol, and follow the Canada’s Food Guide or the specific advice of your health care provider
- Brush twice a day using toothpaste with fluoride and floss once a day
- Watch for changes in your mouth
- Visit your dental health care provider regularly and talk to them about your diabetes
- Drink tap water because it contains fluoride

For more information, talk to your dentist or dental hygienist or call Ottawa Public Health at 613-580-6744.