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National Diabetes Month: Cases of Diabetes Rising at Alarming Rate

Diabetics may be at higher risk for oral health issues

NAPERVILLE, Ill. (November 3, 2015) - A record number of Illinois residents are suffering from diabetes, a disease that is the seventh leading cause of death in the United States.¹

With more than one million reported cases last year, 2014 was the third consecutive year cases of diabetes have increased in Illinois.² In fact, cases of diabetes have more than doubled in the past 20 years,³ and the Illinois Department of Public Health estimates that number will rise an additional 25 percent by 2020.⁴

Research suggests that diabetics may be at increased risk for oral health issues like gum disease. November is National Diabetes Month, and Delta Dental of Illinois is educating Illinoisans about the links of diabetes with oral health.

According to Dr. Katina Spadoni, dental director for Delta Dental of Illinois, the connection between oral health and diabetes goes both ways.

“Research shows that infections in the mouth can make it more difficult for people with diabetes to control their blood glucose levels, which creates a better environment for plaque, the primary cause of gum disease. Furthermore, we know that gum disease can increase the risk for diabetes complications such as heart disease, blindness, kidney disease and amputation,” said Spadoni.

In addition, diabetes can accelerate the progression of gum disease, which can cause the gums to pull away from the teeth, eventually leading to the breakdown of the bones inside the mouth and tooth loss.

Visiting the dentist can help protect against the effects of diabetes and gum disease. Dentists can treat the plaque that leads to gum disease with a simple cleaning by removing the plaque and tartar from the surface and the gum lines of the teeth. In more severe cases, surgery may be required to restore the soft tissues broken down by plaque and bacteria. Dentists may also prescribe an anti-bacterial mouthwash or toothpaste that can help reduce bacteria in the mouth and plaque on teeth.

It may seem simple, but not all Illinois residents are getting to the dentist often enough. According to the Delta Dental of Illinois 2014 Oral Health and Well-Being Survey, about one-third of adults said they didn't visit the dentist in the past year. A key factor that leads to more visits is dental coverage. The same survey found that having dental coverage increases the likelihood of getting to the dentist by 50 percent.

About Delta Dental of Illinois

Delta Dental of Illinois (DDIL) is a not-for-profit dental service corporation that provides dental benefit programs to individuals and more than 5,000 employee groups throughout Illinois. DDIL covers 2 million individuals, employees and family members nationwide. DDIL is based in Naperville, Ill., and offers single-site administration and client services.

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¹ National Diabetes Statistics Report, 2014

² Illinois Department of Public Health, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2014

³ Centers for Disease Control, National Diabetes Statistics Report, 2014

⁴ Illinois Department of Public Health, 2014