



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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National Diabetes Month: The Silent Signs of Gum Disease

Delta Dental advises people with diabetes to pay attention for warning signs of gum disease

NAPERVILLE, Ill. (Nov. 4, 2013) – Diabetes is a prevalent problem in Illinois. According to the Illinois Department of Public Health, an estimated 800,000 Illinois residents age 18 and older suffer from the disease and an additional 500,000 have diabetes and don't yet know. Each year, more than 2,700 Illinois residents die from the disease.

November is National Diabetes Month, an opportune time for Delta Dental of Illinois to remind Illinoisans of the well-documented connection between diabetes and oral health.¹ People with diabetes tend to develop periodontal (gum) disease earlier in life, and more severely. Though it is often painless, Delta Dental of Illinois cautions diabetics to be mindful of its warning signs. These can include bad breath, bleeding gums after brushing or flossing, red, swollen or tender gums or changes in the way your teeth fit when you bite. Unfortunately, many people ignore these red flags until it's too late.²

“Individuals often ignore the warning signs of gum disease because there is usually no pain involved,” said Dr. Katina Spadoni, dental director for Delta Dental of Illinois. “Instead, they will brush a little better to get rid of the bleeding or use mouthwash to hide their bad breath. The best thing to do is to schedule regular visits with your dentist to make sure that you are not developing gum disease.”

Maintaining regular dental visits is particularly critical for individuals with diabetes. Oral diseases such as tooth decay and gum disease are often reversible if they are diagnosed and treated early. Dentists can also check for other common mouth conditions that affect diabetics, including dry mouth, ulcers and infections. Gum disease and other mouth conditions may also be a sign that other medical conditions exist elsewhere in the body. Depending on the findings, the dentist might advise patients to seek a medical consultation.

Even before visiting the dentist, individuals can use an online risk assessment tool (such as Delta Dental's [myDentalScore](#)) to answer a series of questions that can gauge their risk levels for gum disease, oral cancer and other serious oral health problems. Additional lifestyle best practices for people with diabetes include controlling blood sugar, brushing and flossing daily and quitting smoking.

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 in these groups nationwide. DDIL is based in Naperville, Illinois and offers single-site administration and client services.

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¹ National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research. *Diabetes and Oral Health.*

<http://www.nidcr.nih.gov/OralHealth/Topics/Diabetes/default.htm>

² American Diabetes Association. 2013 *Diabetes Facts.* <http://www.diabetes.org/diabetes-basics/diabetes-statistics/>