

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **November is Diabetes Awareness Month** Regular dental visits can help detect serious diseases

**NAPERVILLE, Ill. (November 10, 2014)** – Most Illinoisans know there is a general connection between oral health and overall health, but only 33 percent are aware of the specific connection between gum disease and diabetes.<sup>1</sup> During Diabetes Awareness Month this November, Delta Dental of Illinois wants to educate people about this connection and how the dentist can help detect serious diseases like diabetes.

“Habits like smoking or a poor diet, as well as your genetic makeup, can have health effects throughout your body. So it only makes sense that what is happening in the mouth may mirror what is occurring in the rest of the body,” says Dr. Katina Spadoni, dental director for Delta Dental of Illinois. “We’ve long known that people with diabetes are more susceptible to gum disease, but recent studies have revealed that periodontal disease can actually influence prediabetes and contribute to the progression of diabetes.”

According to the Illinois Department of Public Health, more than 800,000 Illinois residents have diabetes, and an additional 500,000 people have the disease but are unaware.

“The connection of gum disease to diabetes is just one example of the relationship between an individual’s oral health and overall wellness,” says Spadoni. “While research affirms the importance of taking good care of your teeth and gums, it also underscores the role that oral health care providers can have in early detection of serious systemic diseases.”

Spadoni noted that there are numerous reasons to keep regular checkups on your calendar, even if you take good care of your teeth.

- A dental professional can perform an exam to screen for oral cancer and other health issues that can be difficult to spot on your own. More than 120 diseases can cause specific signs and symptoms in and around the mouth and jaw.<sup>2</sup> Dental professionals performing checkups can spot symptoms that could indicate serious health problems elsewhere in the body that need attention.
- Checkups allow your dentist to keep up with changes to your health status. Upon learning of current medical conditions or treatments you’re receiving, your dentist can make recommendations to help you proactively counter the negative effects the conditions and treatments would otherwise have on your oral health.

- Preventive checkups provide dentists with opportunities to identify and intervene early. This can reduce any pain and the financial costs associated with more severe forms of dental diseases. If caught early, periodontal disease is easier to manage and, in some cases, reverse.

For people with existing oral health problems, such as gum disease, one dental visit a year may not be enough, according to Spadoni. For those at higher risk of developing oral problems, three to four visits a year may be best. “On the other hand,” Spadoni says, “if you enjoy good oral health and have low risks, you will not need the same level of preventive treatments or exams.”

For more information about how you can improve your oral health, visit [deltadentalilblog.com](http://deltadentalilblog.com).

### ***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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<sup>1</sup>Morpace, Inc. conducted the Delta Dental of Illinois Oral Health and Well-Being Survey on behalf of Delta Dental of Illinois with 151 consumers across the state.

<sup>2</sup>Steven L. Bricker, Robert P. Langlais, and Craig S. Miller, *Oral Diagnosis, Oral Medicine and Treatment Planning* (Philadelphia: Lea & Febiger, 1994).