

Public release date: 12-May-2010



Contact: Anna Borthwick

anna.borthwick@ed.ac.uk

44-131-651-4400

[University of Edinburgh](http://www.ed.ac.uk)

Better dental care may help people with diabetes, study finds

Treating serious gum disease in diabetics can help to lower their blood sugar levels, a study has shown. Researchers have found that reducing inflammation of the gums in people with diabetes can help lower the risk of serious complications associated with the condition, such as eye problems and heart disease. The study – led by the University of Edinburgh – analysed the findings of previous research into the link between diabetes and serious gum disease – known as periodontal disease.

The findings are published as part of the international Cochrane Collaboration.

The team analysed the results of three of the included studies to show that there is a small but significant benefit to treating periodontal disease in people with diabetes. They say there is a need for further research to fully understand the link between the conditions.

It is thought that when bacteria infect the mouth and cause inflammation, the resulting chemical changes reduce the effectiveness of insulin and raise the levels of blood sugar.

Dental treatment to reduce this inflammation may therefore help to reduce blood sugar levels.

The team – including researchers from UCL Eastman Dental Institute, Peninsula Dental School and the University of Ottawa – say their findings highlight the need for doctors and dentists to work together in the treatment of people with diabetes.

Dr Terry Simpson, Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Edinburgh's Dental Institute, who led the study, said: "This research confirms that there may be a link between serious gum disease and diabetes. It highlights the role dentists can play in managing the condition, given that gum disease is very treatable.

"By far the most important aspect of diabetes management is the use of insulin, drugs and diet to control blood sugar levels – but maintaining good dental health is something patients and healthcare

professionals should also recognise. Although the benefit in terms of insulin management is small, anything we can do to promote the wellbeing of people with diabetes should be welcomed."

###

