



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Regular Oral Care Improves Whole-Body Wellness – *Gum Disease-Diabetes Connection Is One Example* –

Oak Brook, Ill. (November 3, 2008) – Nearly 21 million Americans have been diagnosed with diabetes¹. It's no wonder that this disease has been termed our country's biggest epidemic. Of even greater concern is that nearly three times that number – an estimated 57¹ million people in the United States – have a condition called prediabetes, and a significant proportion of these people will develop Type 2 diabetes within 10 years².

But regular visits to the dentist's office can help these potential diabetics get an early warning that they should be on the alert.

“We've long known that people with diabetes are more susceptible to gum disease,” says Max Anderson, DDS, a national oral health advisor for Delta Dental Plans Association. “But recent studies have revealed that periodontal disease can actually influence prediabetes and contribute to the progression of diabetes.”

“This connection to diabetes is just one example of the relationship between an individual's oral health and his or her overall wellness,” says Dr. Anderson. “While the 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.”

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

* Dental professionals can use today's dental exams to screen for oral cancers and other health issues that can be difficult to spot on your own. More than 120 diseases³ can cause specific signs and symptoms in and around the mouth and jaw. 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 medical conditions you've developed or treatments you're receiving, your dentist can recommend strategies 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 in dental diseases. 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.

“Dental health professionals can suggest the frequency that's most appropriate for each patient,” Dr. Anderson said. “Some people don't need to be seen twice each year, while some need to be seen more often. Consult with your dentist to determine the number of yearly visits that is right for you.”

Delta Dental Plans Association, based in Oak Brook, Ill., is a national network of independent not-for-profit dental service corporations specializing in providing dental benefits programs to 51 million Americans in more than 93,000 employee groups throughout the country.

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¹American Diabetes Association

²Journal of Periodontology, March 2007

³Steven L. Bricker, Robert P. Langlais, and Craig S. Miller, Oral Diagnosis, Oral Medicine and Treatment Planning (Philadelphia: Lea & Febiger, 1994)