

CLINIC CONVERSATIONS

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MIDWESTERN UNIVERSITY CLINICS NEWSLETTER

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Tooth Loss Creates Challenges but Prevention, Restoration Possible

Sidharth Mohan, D.D.S., College of Dental Medicine-Illinois, Dental Institute

In the United States today there are more than 36 million Americans who do not have any teeth and 120 million Americans who are missing at least one tooth. This number is expected to increase in the next 15 years to more than 200 million Americans with partial tooth loss. In our elderly population, the ratio of individuals who have tooth loss is 2-to-1.

Tooth loss happens from decay, gum disease, injury, cancer, or simply wear. This can affect all people but impacts the most vulnerable population disproportionately, including the economically disadvantaged and elderly. Tooth loss can lead to harmful consequences and challenges. It can decrease

our ability to chew properly as the remaining teeth begin to shift and change the way we bite our teeth together. Shifted teeth can also cause food particles to get easily trapped between the spaces making cleaning difficult, which can further gum disease and bone loss around teeth. More serious consequences of tooth loss include significant nutritional changes, obesity, diabetes, coronary artery disease, and some forms of cancer.

Tooth loss can be prevented with proper home care and regular visits to the dentist for cleanings and checkups. With teeth that have already been lost, replacement by prosthetic restoration becomes essential. There are removable and fixed dental prosthetic replacements based on the number and location of missing teeth, including complete or partial dentures, overdentures, bridges, and implant crowns.

Restoring lost teeth can be a lengthy process that requires commitment from both the patient and the dentist, but it can be a crucial step for improving your overall health. Tooth restoration can also positively impact your self-confidence, as our appearance plays a role in our lives both socially and psychologically. A thorough clinical examination and treatment of any underlying disease is essential before undergoing restoration of the missing teeth.

How Can Diabetes Affect Your Eyes?

Hye Seon Yoo, O.D., Chicago College of Optometry, Eye Institute

37.3 million Americans, or one-in-ten, have diabetes. It is the leading cause of new cases of blindness in adults in the United States.

Diabetes can damage your eyes over time, eventually causing vision loss or even permanent blindness. When the tiny blood vessels that supply the retina (the light sensitive structure in the back of the eye) are damaged by the high blood sugar levels, they can become leaky or close

off, starving the retinal tissue of blood supply. The changes to the retina from diabetes is called diabetic retinopathy. Diabetes can also make you more likely to have other eye conditions such as cataracts and glaucoma.

It's important for people with diabetes to have a dilated eye exam at least once a year, since there may not be any symptoms in the early stages of diabetic retinopathy. Early detection and treatment may prevent future vision problems and blindness.



You can have 20/20 vision and still have diabetic retinopathy. Some early signs include:

- Blurry vision
- Double vision
- Redness or pain in your eyes
- Floaters
- Dry eyes
- Loss of peripheral vision

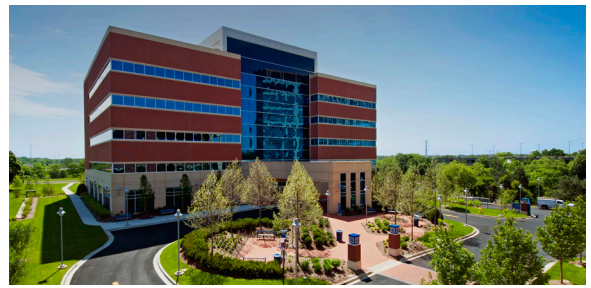
Lower the chance for vision loss by keeping TRACK of your diabetes:

- Take your medications as prescribed by your doctor
- Reach and maintain a healthy weight
- Add more physical activity
- Control your ABS- A1C, blood pressure, and cholesterol
- Kick the smoking habit

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