Is Your Mouth Warning You About Diabetes? 6 Red Flags Transcript

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How Bleeding Gums Can Signal Blood Sugar Problems

Could your bleeding gums actually be signaling you that you are heading towards diabetes? This is a real thing that I really want to discuss with you and help you understand what is the connection between insulin, the way the body works and creates energy, and your mouth health.

think you might be surprised. Really the mouth is an amazing dashboard of what's going on everywhere and this is one area that a lot of problems in the mouth actually can give you a quick insight into how things are working with your insulin and your blood sugar management.

So what is this connection and what really even is insulin? Insulin is a molecule in the bloodstream that I like to think of it as very similar to a key.

So what it does is it will grab sugars out of the bloodstream. You eat something that has a sugar in it. Now this isn't just a donut. That's not what I'm talking about.

This could also be an apple. or a piece of bread, just any kind of sugar molecule. That insulin grabs it and then uses its key, opens the cell and puts it where it is needed.

So this is the way that we create energy in our bodies. Our bodies really love to use these sugar molecules to give us fast energy.

What Insulin Does in the Body

Well, they have to be able to get into the correct cell to be able to create energy for the correct system in the body. Insulin is amazing at doing that as long as the body is working as it should.

So what happens with diabetes? What even goes on? Well, there's something called type 1 diabetes where the body, the pancreas specifically, it just doesn't make insulin anymore.

So the sugars in the blood can't get to where they belong. This is a problem. So those people actually have to add supplemental insulin, right? You hear about the shots and things they have to do.

They have to add insulin to the body to be able to do the job that insulin only can do. Well, there's another type of diabetes or another type of problem with insulin in the body.

and it can lead to all kinds of inflammation. So let's talk about this one. Now there's some lifestyle things that go on, we'll get into those in a moment, that might lead to the cells becoming less just responsive to the insulin.

So the insulin grabs a piece of sugar, it knocks on the cell's doors, it's all right, let's open it up, and the cell doesn't allow it in. This is called insulin resistance.

So this is when the cells are no longer responding to the insulin the same way they used to. So instead of that sugar molecule getting into the cell, having to create energy, or sometimes what happens is that there's excess sugars in the blood and they actually go and get stored somewhere.

Insulin Resistance and Diabetes Explained

Again, the insulin is a little bit of the driver of this decision process. Well, if the cells aren't listening to insulin anymore, what happens is that the sugars stay higher in the bloodstream.

Rather than getting to where they need to go, they stay higher in the bloodstream and they continue circulating around. Well, in the mouth, this shows up in a few ways.

It's going to show up as bleeding gums. There's a lot of inflammation related to high sugar levels in the system. Again, like we show, there's this high, this vicious cycle of inflammation.

Bleeding gums is one of the first signs that your blood sugars may be higher than they should be, than your body wants them to be. The next thing is slow healing.

Your body, again, that inflammation that comes from these high sugar levels doesn't allow the body to heal as it should. So if you had a tooth removed, if you just even bit your cheek and got a canker sore or something like that, and you can't quite heal from it or it just was really slow, this might be an insulin problem.

The next thing is dry mouth. So dry mouth is really dangerous for gum problems, but as well as tooth decay. because saliva is the thing that helps to buffer all those sugars, kind of rinse them out of your mouth.

Dry mouth may be a sign that your blood sugars are off. Fungal infections, if you're getting yeast infections everywhere and that white coating on the tongue, it might be that your blood sugars are off because yeasts, they love sugar.

And if there's more circulating, they're gonna flourish. Another one is more cavities for that exact reason. There's now more sugars in the saliva and all of the circulating systems.

and bacterial love sugar. Bacteria eating sugar create acid, which leads to tooth decay. We're seeing more tooth decay in people who have high blood sugar levels.

Mouth Symptoms Linked to High Blood Sugar

Bad breath. Bad breath is really related to this lack of metabolizing sugars. It's still circulating. So you get something called ketoacidosis in the body and you get a real telltale bad breath from that.

These are all signs that your insulin levels are not good or your blood sugar levels are high. Your insulin is not being listened to like it should be.

Now why does this happen? What causes the cells to be less responsive to insulin? Some of it is if they just get a lot of knocks on the door. You have a real high sugar level diet.

You're eating a lot of very highly processed foods which have easily absorbed sugars in them. Now what that does is there's constantly sugar. So the cells, I kind of like to think of it as the boy who cried wolf syndrome.

You know, the cells are like, no, you knocked on me, you know, literally 20 minutes ago. There certainly cannot be more sugar that needs to get into the cell.

I'm not opening the door this time. I don't believe you. You're crying wolf too many times, but it's just because there's so many times that there's elevated levels of blood sugar because of the diet.

So how do you help to manage this? Processed foods are key. You have to eat real foods. Let's take an apple, for example. An apple has sugars in it, a lot of natural sugars, but those natural sugars are also wrapped up in fibers.

What does this do? It slows down the release of sugars into the bloodstream. So it gives you a slow drip rather than a massive flood. So yes, there's sugars there, but they're there in a way that the body can just dose them out as the body will recognize them.

Whole foods are key, foods in their real form, not processed foods.

What Causes Insulin Resistance

When they process them, they make them incredibly easy to digest and to absorb, and we get sugar rushes, massive sugar rushes that our body just really can't use very well.

Staying hydrated is also something that's really important. The better hydration you have, really kind of the more diluting effect it has in these blood sugar areas.

When it comes to mouth health, I want you to be using remineralizing things. either hydroxyapatite on the outside, hydroxyapatite tooth care products, and minerals and vitamins on the inside.

I talk a lot about this. Really, really important. One big one that sometimes isn't always controllable is stress levels. So stress levels will also decrease insulin sensitivity, increase insulin that's not being listened to anymore.

So think about that and go, are those bleeding gums actually because the stressor that I have in my life? Is there any way I could help manage that? Now I know I run a very high stress life as well.

Sometimes it's not manageable. So work on the things that you can work on. This is really an interesting cycle of inflammation when it comes to the mouth as well, because high or less sensitivity to insulin or what we call insulin resistance will lead to bleeding gums, will lead to gum disease.

But gum disease will lead to insulin resistance. And they're constantly affecting each other, these two systems. It's paying attention to those bleeding gums that's so crucial.

I'll always remember this cutest little lady named Gail. Now Gail is one of the kind of patients that I always look forward to seeing. I didn't have to do a lot of dentistry on her.

She came every single six months, like clockwork for years. And you know, we, I saw her over many years, so I saw her age and she was always so proud that she could get herself here.

She was always dressed so cute when she came.

How to Support Blood Sugar and Oral Health

And one time my hygienist came to get me to do the exam and she said, you need to go see what's going on with Gail. Something's not right with her. So I went in and I noticed she wasn't dressed quite as sharp as she usually was.

Now, obviously you don't have to dress up to go to the dentist. So that wasn't anything special, but it was different for her. As I sat her up and started talking with her, I noticed she was just moving a little slower than she had in the past.

Now, obviously it was six months later, but my hygienist said the thing she noticed is that Gail's gums were bleeding like crazy. And I looked at Gail and I said, Gail, I think you're pre-diabetic.

She said, what are you talking about? I said, no. Do you feel like your energy levels have dropped? She said, substantially, I just cannot do anything that I could do even a couple of months ago.

Said, yeah, your gums are giving us signs. Even just the way that you're holding yourself today, it tells me you are really not feeling well. And she looked at me and she said, I am not feeling well.

He said, you know what you need to go do? You need to go to your doctor. You need to get something called an HbA1c test. Now you're probably not going to remember that, but basically what it is, it's a blood test that can be done to see what have your blood sugar levels been across a month's time, 30 days time.

Now I can go get my finger prick today and get a blood sugar level right now, but that's only telling me what's going on right now. The HbA1c tells us what's been happening over a month's time.

Said, I need you to go and find this out. Go to your doctor and go ask them for this. So she did.

A Patient Story: Catching Diabetes Early

She went and she got the test. And what she found out is she wasn't even just pre-diabetic. She was actually in full blown type two diabetes. And her entire system was inflamed.

Everything. Her brain wasn't working right. She had no energy to do what she'd always done. That's why she wasn't as dressed nicely as she had been in the past.

Her gums were bleeding like crazy. She'd even had a couple of cavities at that last exam. And like I said, she just rarely got cavities. So I knew something was wrong.

So don't ignore the bleeding gums. Don't ignore these symptoms. They may be your body screaming, trying to tell you something is going on with my insulin, with the way that my body's processing blood sugars.

She went on some medication for this, and the next time we saw her in six months, she was back to the same old gale, and she said, thank you so much for letting me know that this could be something I could do something about, that I'm not just getting older.

Was she getting older? Sure, but not rapidly. That was the change that was different. So if you feel like some of these symptoms may be yours as well, you know, you have bleeding gums, slow healing, just inflamed everywhere, yeast infections, dry mouth, you're getting cavities or that telltale bad breath.

It's time for you to figure out, is this an insulin problem? And if so, you need to go and visit your doctor and work with that. How do you take care of this?

This is something that's so important to me and near and dear to my heart because we see it every single day. If this is something you feel like you need to know more about, first of all, come visit us here in American Fork, Utah, if you're anywhere local.

We would love to see you and give you some ideas about just how does your overall health affect your mouth and vice versa.

When to Get Tested and Seek Help

What are we seeing in your mouth that may indicate some other things? Check out my directory livingwellofdrmichelle.com to find a dentist near you that can do the same thing.

This is the kind of thing that I love to teach about and talk about. If you want more information please subscribe. Please share this with someone who may have lower energy levels, bleeding gums, you've noticed a change.

Share this with them to be able to then understand What might be happening and what do I need to do to find the answers? Thank you for being here. As always, my mission is to just help you live well.