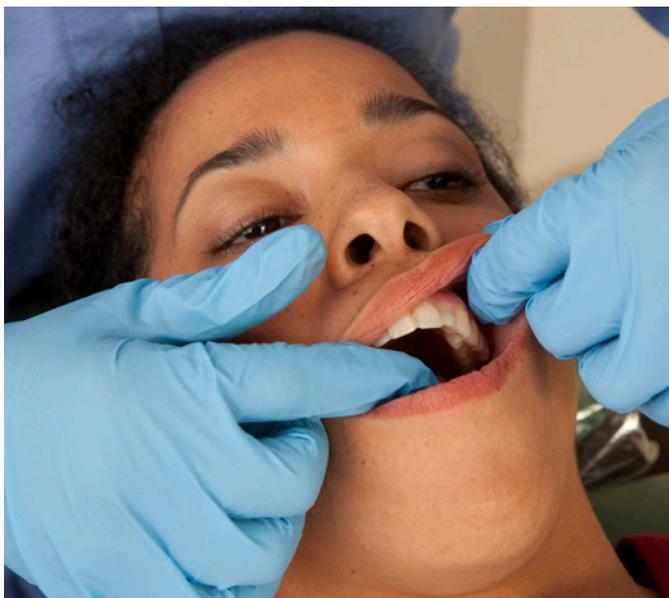# 5 Medical Conditions That Hurt Your Mouth

(NC) We all know that prevention is one of the keys to maintaining overall health. But did you know that certain medical conditions can have oral signs and symptoms that, if left untreated, may cause already existing health issues to worsen?

If you have or are at risk for one or more of the following health conditions, it is particularly important to pay attention to your oral health.

Arthritis: This disease carries with it an increased risk of oral infections, bleeding gums, bad breath, tempro-mandibular joint disease, reduced ability to open the jaw, and painful chewing.

Diabetes: This condition puts you at a higher risk for oral health problems such as gingivitis (early gum disease) and periodontis (serious gum disease). Gum disease may also increase blood sugar levels, making diabetes harder to control.

Dry mouth: Many conditions and medications cause dry mouth. Chronic dry mouth may lead to gum disease, yeast infections of the mouth, burning mouth, rampant tooth decay, bad breath, and other oral problems.

Oral cancer: Treatments may cause increased risk for conditions associated with dry mouth and may also include painful eating, change in taste, swelling or peeling of the tongue and jaw stiffness. Mouth infections may delay treatment.

Reflux disease: Stomach acids that back up into the esophagus and sometimes into the mouth may cause increased risk for oral cancer, gum disease and damage to tooth enamel, leading to sensitivity and increased cavities.

Visiting your oral health professional on a regular basis is one of the most important steps you can take to maintain or improve your oral health. Dental hygienists have the skills, knowledge and judgment to provide sound clinical advice related to the treatment of oral conditions associated with many diseases. Dental hygienists are registered to practise by the College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario.

Find more information at **www.cdho.org**.

College of **Dental Hygienists** of Ontario
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