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## Media Release

# Diabetes and Dental Hygiene

November 23, 2015 (Ottawa, ON) – Dental hygienists join Canadians across the country in celebrating National Diabetes Awareness Month this November, and they remind us that oral health professionals are important members of the diabetes health care team.

According to the Canadian Diabetes Association, more than 9 million Canadians are living with diabetes or prediabetes. These individuals are particularly susceptible to oral health problems because of a lowered resistance to infection and higher potential for inflammation. In particular, people with diabetes are twice as likely as those without diabetes to develop gingivitis, an inflammation of the gums, which can progress to periodontal (gum) disease if left untreated. Periodontal disease may affect the body's ability to control blood sugar levels; people with consistently high blood sugar levels are known to be at increased risk for serious complications such as blindness, kidney failure, heart disease, stroke, and even amputation of extremities.

The good news is that periodontal disease can be prevented and controlled, especially if caught early, and the reduction of inflammation may help to improve blood sugar levels. As Donna Scott, president of the Canadian Dental Hygienists Association (CDHA), explains, "Dental hygienists check for early signs of gingivitis and periodontal disease during regular dental hygiene visits and will work with their clients to develop an oral care plan to achieve and maintain good oral and overall health." Dental hygienists are also able to identify potential signs of diabetes in clients who have not yet been diagnosed with the illness, so all Canadians should remember to visit their dental hygienist regularly as part of their oral health care routine.

Serving the profession since 1963, CDHA is the collective national voice of more than 26,800 registered dental hygienists working in Canada, directly representing 17,500 individual members including dental hygienists and students. Dental hygiene is the sixth largest registered health profession in Canada with professionals working in a variety of settings, including independent dental hygiene practice, with people of all ages, addressing issues related to oral health. For more information on oral health, visit: [www.dentalhygienecanada.ca](http://www.dentalhygienecanada.ca).

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Angie D'Aoust, Director of Marketing and Communications  
1-800-267-5235 ext. 134, or by email [adaoust@cdha.ca](mailto:adaoust@cdha.ca)