United Concordia - Newsroom

Good oral hygiene can minimize GLP-1 side effects impacting dental health



CAMP HILL, Pa. (April 8, 2025) — As glucagon-like peptide 1 (GLP-1) prescription medications commonly used for diabetes management and weight loss continue to increase in popularity, some findings reveal side effects that could affect oral health. Taking consistent, good care of your teeth throughout treatment may help lessen their impact.

“More and more people are experiencing the benefits of these medications, with one out of eight adults, or 12%, in the United States reporting having taken a GLP-1 drug in a 2024 survey,” said Roosevelt Allen, DDS, MAGD, ABGD, chief dental officer, United Concordia Dental. “While additional research is needed, there have been reported side effects — such as dry mouth, vomiting and bad breath — that not only affect your oral health but can also take a toll on your self-confidence.”

GLP-1s mimic a naturally occurring hormone in the body, glucagon-like peptide 1, that regulates sugar levels and reduces appetite.

Here are four ways GLP-1 drugs may impact the mouth:

- **Bad breath**. One way the drug works is by slowing down the emptying of food in the stomach to the small intestines. While this helps patients feel fuller longer, it may also cause fishy-smelling burps or bad breath to occur.
- **Dry mouth**. Reduced saliva production can be experienced, inhibiting the mouth’s natural way of offsetting acids and removing food particles. Chronic dry mouth increases the risk of tooth decay, cavities and gum disease.
- **Digestive issues**. Nausea, vomiting and constipation are common GLP-1 side effects. Vomiting can cause dehydration and nutrition deficiencies that affect oral and overall health, as well as eventually damage the outer layer of the teeth.
- **Changes in taste**. Some alterations in taste can happen, including a metallic taste, reduced sensitivity to certain flavors, and sweet or savory food preferences. This could lead to changes in diet that affect the health of the mouth and body.

“Taking excellent care of your teeth and gums, visiting your dentist regularly and staying hydrated are a good start in managing some of these symptoms. Dentists can also play an important role in helping monitor and address dental issues while taking prescriptions, so be sure to discuss with them any changes in medications or adverse long-term problems,” said Allen.

For more information on oral health, visit the Wellness Resources section atUnitedConcordia.com. Sign up to get the latest company news.

Contact:
Suzanne Cibotti
United Concordia Dental
717-260-7549
suzanne.cibotti@ucci.com

Leilyn Perri
Highmark Health
717-302-4243
leilyn.perri@highmarkhealth.org

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