



Photo: Periodontal disease

among First Nations and Inuit, with 57% of adults smoking daily compared with only 31% of Métis adults and 20% of non-Aboriginal Canadian adults (FNIGC, 2012b; Tait, 2009; Métis Centre, 2011).

Uncontrolled diabetes and poor oral hygiene are also risk factors for periodontal disease (Genco, 1996; University of Maryland Medical Center, 2011). Type II diabetes is 3-5 times more prevalent among First Nations people and is increasing among Inuit, putting them at greater risk for periodontal disease (Health Canada, 2012). Also noteworthy is the fact that poor oral health can affect diabetes management (Gillis, 2010).

Other risk factors for periodontal disease include osteoporosis, obesity, genetic factors, stress, and low socioeconomic status (Genco, 1996; University of Maryland Medical Center, 2011). Local factors such as tooth position or the use of partial dentures or orthodontic appliances can also affect the status of the periodontium by causing build-up and retention of plaque (Clerehugh, Tugnait, & Genco, 2009; Darby & Walsh 2010).

Prevention and Treatment

The most effective way to prevent and manage periodontal disease is through regular home care and professional

maintenance. Daily flossing between the teeth and twice daily toothbrushing will help to control build-up of plaque. Regular care by a dental professional is also recommended. The First Nations and Inuit Health Branch provides dental care through the Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) program. NIHB are available to all registered First Nations and Inuit in Canada. The dental benefits include regular exams and cleaning as well as, periodontal and other services (Health Canada, 2013). Despite the insurance coverage, 41% of Aboriginal people have not seen a dentist in the past year (Lawrence, 2010).

For More Information

- **Canadian Dental Association**
www.cda-adc.ca/en/oral_health
- **BC Dental Association**
www.bcdental.org/Dental_health
- **BC Dental Hygienists' Association**
www.bcdha.com/?page_id=23
- **Health Canada – Dental Benefits – First Nations and Inuit Health**
www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fniah-spnia/nihb-ssna/benefit-prestation/dent/index-eng.php

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