



## Update! Smile Smart for Your Health

Delta Dental of South Dakota has added to the list of conditions eligible for enhanced benefits.

Those eligible for Delta Dental of South Dakota's Smile Smart Program include:

- People with periodontal (gum) disease.
- People with diabetes.
- Pregnant women.
- People with high-risk cardiac conditions. **New!**
- People with kidney failure or who are undergoing dialysis. **New!**
- People undergoing cancer-related chemotherapy and/or radiation. **New!**
- People with suppressed immune systems due to organ transplant, stem cell (bone marrow) transplants or those with HIV-positive status. **New!**
- People at risk for oral cancer.

Keep in mind that the timing of treatment is important when serious medical conditions exist. If enrollees have one of these conditions, he/she should talk with the dentist and doctor about when and what treatments are appropriate.

Delta Dental of South Dakota's Smile Smart for Your Health enhanced benefits program integrates medical and dental care - customizing benefits at the individual level by offering services to people with specific health conditions that can be positively affected by additional oral health care. Delta Dental enrollees with diabetes, pregnancy, periodontal disease, high-risk cardiac conditions, kidney failure/dialysis, suppressed immune systems or cancer-related chemotherapy and/or radiation all qualify for additional services. The program also includes benefits to aid in the detection of oral cancer.

### **Benefits for People with Periodontal (Gum) Disease**

For enrollees with periodontal disease or periodontal surgery, periodontal maintenance needs to be conducted more frequently than the traditional two cleanings per year. The additional cleanings may be more economical than periodontal surgery, and they help maintain overall health and reduce tooth loss compared to periodontal patients who do not receive these therapies. Enrollees with periodontal disease are eligible for up to four teeth cleanings, either prophylaxis or periodontal maintenance, in a benefit year. Enrollees are also eligible for two applications of topical fluoride varnish in a benefit year.

### **Benefits for People with Diabetes**

The relationship between diabetes and oral health, specifically periodontal disease, is recognized by both the medical and dental communities. Research has confirmed that diabetes worsens periodontal disease, and it strongly suggests that severe periodontal disease increases the severity of diabetes. A number of studies show that when diabetics receive professional teeth cleanings, their blood glucose levels are much better controlled. Enrollees with diabetes are eligible for up to four teeth cleanings, either prophylaxis or periodontal maintenance, in a benefit year.

### **Benefits for Pregnant Women**

Scientific evidence indicates that women with periodontal disease may be more likely to give birth to premature babies. Some studies have shown that a significant percentage of the half million premature, low birth weight infants born in the United States each year may be attributed to infectious oral disease. Clinical studies of pregnant women with periodontal disease suggest that more frequent professional teeth cleanings may benefit the health of both baby and mother. Pregnant enrollees are eligible for one additional prophylaxis or periodontal maintenance visit during the pregnancy.

### **Benefits for People with High-Risk Cardiac Conditions**

A recent guideline released by the American Heart Association indicates that maintaining good oral health may be an important factor in avoiding infective endocarditis. Infective endocarditis occurs when bacteria, often from the mouth, enters the bloodstream and attacks the lining of the heart. The inflammatory reaction from periodontal disease may contribute to cardiovascular disease. The Smile Smart benefit was developed to help at-risk individuals better maintain their oral health in an effort to lower their risk for infective endocarditis. People with high-risk cardiac conditions are eligible for up to four teeth cleanings, either prophylaxis or periodontal maintenance, in a benefit year. Conditions include: a history of infective endocarditis; certain congenital heart defects such as having one ventricle instead of the normal two; individuals with artificial heart valves; heart valve defects caused by acquired conditions like rheumatic heart disease; hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, which causes abnormal thickening of the heart muscle; individuals with pulmonary shunts or conduits; and mitral valve prolapse with regurgitation (blood leakage).

### **Benefits for People with Kidney Failure or Who are Undergoing Dialysis**

According to the National Kidney Foundation, one out of nine Americans has chronic kidney disease. Dental infections increase the risk of systemic infection in people with kidney disease, and systemic infection increases the risk of serious side effects. These individuals may benefit from having their teeth cleaned professionally at more frequent intervals to reduce the buildup of bacteria in the mouth. People with kidney failure or who are undergoing dialysis are eligible for up to four teeth cleanings, either prophylaxis or periodontal maintenance, in a benefit year.

### **Benefits for People Undergoing Cancer-Related Chemotherapy and/or Radiation**

People undergoing chemotherapy and/or radiation are at increased risk for infection because their immune system response has been weakened. Head and neck radiation cause some specific oral health problems. According to the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR), prevention of problems in the mouth is critical to

obtaining the maximum benefit from cancer treatment, and people are encouraged to see a dentist before beginning treatment. Because a common side effect of head and neck radiation is increased cavities, the NIDCR recommends fluoride treatment and the use of prescription-strength fluoride toothpaste for those undergoing this treatment. Prescription-strength fluoride toothpaste and mouth rinses are often covered by medical/prescription drug benefit plans. Enrollees who are undergoing cancer-related chemotherapy and/or radiation are eligible for up to four teeth cleanings, either prophylaxis or periodontal maintenance, in a benefit year. Enrollees are also eligible for two applications of topical fluoride varnish in a benefit year.

### **Benefits for People with Suppressed Immune Systems**

It is well established scientifically that people with serious health conditions like HIV-positive status and organ failure are at increased risk for infection generally because of their weakened immune system. These individuals may benefit from having their teeth cleaned professionally at more frequent intervals to reduce the buildup of bacteria in the mouth. Enrollees who have suppressed immune systems due to HIV-positive status, organ transplant, and/or stem cell (bone marrow) transplant are eligible for up to four teeth cleanings, either prophylaxis or periodontal maintenance, in a benefit year. Enrollees are also eligible for two applications of topical fluoride varnish in a benefit year.

### **Benefits to Help in the Detection of Oral Cancer**

This year in the United States, 8,000 people will die from oral cancer and over 30,000 new cases will be diagnosed. The brush biopsy is a powerful tool in the early detection of oral cancer/precancerous cells. The procedure is used to evaluate unexplained tiny white and red lesions. All Delta Dental of South Dakota plans cover the brush biopsy.

### **Smile Smart is Easy!**

Enrollees should simply have their dentist report their condition on the claim forms.

Note: Not all Delta Dental contracts cover the Smile Smart benefits. Please check your plan description to see if these benefits are a part of your dental coverage.

Dentists may or may not charge for exams related to added periodontal maintenance or cleanings. Note that the additional exams are not included with the enhanced benefits of additional periodontal maintenance or cleanings.