

The Connection Between Oral & Overall Health

We often take our oral health for granted, and many people don't even think about it until they are in pain. Somehow, it's become normal to think about our mouths and our teeth as completely separate from the rest of our body. But oral health is very closely related to overall health.

Preventive dental visits are an important way to maintain not just a healthy mouth but a healthy body as well. Regular dentist visits can detect signs of nutritional deficiencies, general infection, or even more serious systemic diseases. **More than 120 diseases can cause specific signs and symptoms in and around the mouth and jaw, like swollen or bleeding gums, ulcers, dry mouth, bad breath, and metallic taste.** But a dentist doing regular check-ups can spot symptoms that could indicate serious health problems elsewhere in the body.

Some of these health concerns include:

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Heart disease

People with gum disease have nearly double the risk for heart disease as those with healthy gums, according to the American Academy of Periodontology.

Diabetes

Studies show that people with diabetes are more susceptible to the development of gum disease and other oral health problems.

Pregnancy

During pregnancy, hormonal changes may increase the risk of gingivitis (inflammation of the gums).

Oral cancer

Your dentist can screen for oral cancer and other cancers of the head and neck when you go in for a regular check-up. Survival rates greatly increase the earlier the cancer is discovered and treated.

Evidence Based Dentistry

Connecting Oral Health and Overall Health

Evidence Based Dentistry (EBD) is a new approach to designing dental benefits based on scientific evidence that points to an association between an individual's oral health and overall health. Emerging scientific evidence supports a positive correlation between the treatment and prevention of periodontal disease on improving overall systemic health. These effects could impact some of the nation's most prevalent, debilitating, and costly conditions, such as pre-term and low-birth-weight babies, diabetes, heart disease and stroke. Although the evidence is not yet definitive, Delta Dental believes so strongly in the association between oral health and overall health that we're enhancing all of our dental plans to include additional preventive services for patients with certain health conditions.



Getting the Treatment You Need

The improved benefits include coverage of up to four teeth cleanings or periodontal maintenance cleanings per benefit period instead of the typical two. The routine cleanings will be covered at the same coinsurance level as other preventive services, and periodontal maintenance cleanings will be covered at the same coinsurance level as other periodontal services. Both services will be subject to the annual maximum. Contact your benefit administrator to receive more detailed information on your group's coverage. Specific high-risk health conditions that will receive the enhanced EBD preventive benefits include:



- ▶ People with diabetes who have periodontal (gum) conditions
- ▶ Pregnant woman who have periodontal conditions
- ▶ People with cardiovascular disease who have periodontal conditions
- ▶ People with kidney failure or who are undergoing dialysis
- ▶ People with suppressed immune systems due to:
 - Chemotherapy and/or radiation treatment
 - HIV-positive status
 - Organ transplant
 - Stem cell (bone marrow) transplant

Delta Dental of Colorado requires that the treating dentist provide information on the claim form regarding the patient's medical condition. No medical records are required. For diabetics, pregnant women, and those with cardiovascular disease, the dentist will also need to submit appropriate documentation regarding the periodontal condition (such as periodontal charting, chart notes, radiographs, a special narrative, etc.).