

THE ORAL HEALTH EXPERT

Remind yourself why dental benefits are so valuable and brush up on how to obtain dental benefits after retirement. We also celebrate expectant mothers by helping them understand more about oral health and pregnancy.

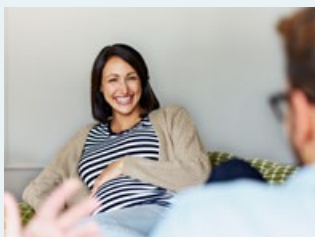
DELTA DENTAL OF ARIZONA

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Continuing Dental Benefits After Retirement



Just because you are retiring doesn't mean it's time to retire your good oral health routine! Maintaining your teeth and gums by brushing and flossing daily and visiting the dentist regularly¹ is essential to keeping your mouth healthy.

Older adults are still at risk for tooth decay and cavities – in fact, tooth decay is a common chronic disease in adults 65 and older.² Despite issues like cavities, about a quarter of adults 65 and older haven't seen the dentist in the past five years, missing valuable cleanings and oral health exams. In addition to cleaning teeth, at each exam dentists should screen for oral cancer, periodontal disease and other mouth problems that become more common in older individuals, so it's important to keep those appointments.

Unfortunately, most Americans lose dental coverage after retirement, and Medicare does not cover dental.³ But retirees do have options. Delta Dental individual plans offer affordable dental benefits directly to individuals and families who need non-employer coverage. Visit deltadental.com and use the Individual Dental Insurance Locator⁴ to find a plan and get a quote.

If neither of those options work, consider paying out-of-pocket to keep those regular dental appointments. A little investment upfront may save you from more costly dental treatments in the long run.

Why Dental Plans Are So Valuable



You're no doubt aware that dental coverage saves you money. Dental benefits prevent you from paying the full cost of many dental procedures, and often completely cover the cost of exams and other preventive services. But dental benefits have value beyond just dollars and cents.

For example, your dentist screens for a number of diseases at every appointment – and you may not even realize it's happening. From oral cancer to diabetes, over 120 diseases and health problems⁵ have symptoms that appear in the mouth. Early detection of these issues means they can be treated early, which usually results in the best outcome for the patient, minimizing the impact both physically and financially.

But that's not the only way your oral health can affect your overall health. Studies show that people with dental benefits are more likely to visit the dentist, and people who visit the dentist regularly are more likely to report good overall health versus those who don't keep regular dental appointments.⁶

Of course, dental benefits also save you money. Benefits are designed to help minimize out-of-pocket costs – and using an in-network dentist will help keep those costs even lower. A network dentist is one who has agreed to provide services at pre-established fees that are lower than what they would usually charge. They also agreed to not “balance bill” patients, meaning they won't charge patients the difference between the pre-established fee and their usual fee.⁷

Dental benefits can result in great cost savings for members – but the value is much more than just monetary. Dental benefits can also impact overall health while providing peace of mind— and that value is priceless.

SMILE STATS



A baby's first real smile is called a “social smile.” It happens around 6-8 weeks old.⁸



Dental damage can occur after six months of frequent vomiting.⁹



Nearly 35 million Americans are 65 years or older.¹⁰



Myth vs. Fact: Pregnant Women and Dental Care



The list of “dos and don’ts” for pregnant women is long – and sometimes contradictory. For example, you may have heard that pregnant women should postpone any dental work until after the baby arrives, but waiting to get infections taken care of can actually cause more damage. Here’s the truth behind that myth and three others.

Myth: Pregnant women should avoid dental work.

Fact: It’s very important for expecting mothers to get dental work taken care of – lingering dental infections can harm the health of both the baby and the mother.¹¹ Dentists usually recommend the second trimester for pregnant women who need work requiring topical or local anesthetics. Expecting mothers should still contact the dentist when experiencing oral health problems, regardless of the trimester.¹²

Myth: A pregnant woman’s oral health has nothing to do with her baby’s overall health.

Fact: Some evidence shows that women with generalized moderate-to-severe periodontal disease may be at higher risk for delivering pre-term, low-birth weight babies.¹³ Because of increased hormones, it’s also common for pregnant women to develop “pregnancy gingivitis,” an inflammation of the gums and surrounding tissues characterized by redness, swelling, tenderness and bleeding. Professional cleanings will help keep conditions like this in check, which is why Delta Dental’s Enhanced Benefits program covers additional cleanings for pregnant members.¹⁴



Myth: Pregnant women should not have dental X-rays taken.

Fact: Because the amount of radiation in dental X-rays is extremely low, it’s fine to take dental X-rays when necessary¹⁵ to help identify potentially harmful dental issues that need immediate treatment. Although the radiation is minimal, the dentist will take precautions to make sure the pregnant woman is properly covered with a lead apron and collar.

Myth: Morning sickness isn’t any fun but it doesn’t actually do any harm.

Fact: Over time, exposure to stomach acid from repeated vomiting can dissolve tooth enamel. Pregnant women who suffer from extreme morning sickness should discuss their symptoms with their dentist, who may offer a solution to lessen harmful effects on tooth enamel, such as rinsing with baking soda to neutralize the acid.¹⁶

MOUTH-HEALTHY RECIPE: BAKED PARMESAN ZUCCHINI ROUNDS

Ingredients:	Directions:
	Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Use foil to line a baking
2 zucchini, cut into 1/4"-thick slices	sheet and spray with cooking spray. Arrange zucchini
	rounds on the baking sheet, then seasonings with
	salt, pepper, garlic salt or red pepper flakes. Sprinkle
Seasonings to taste	Parmesan cheese on each zucchini slice. Bake for 15-20
	minutes or until the cheese turns golden brown.

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SOURCES

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