

# Evidence-Based Dentistry

## Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Delta Dental of Illinois' Enhanced Benefits Program Oral health meets overall health.

### What is evidence-based dentistry?

Evidence-based dentistry links oral health and overall health. It is based on clinically relevant scientific evidence that demonstrates how individuals with specific health conditions can benefit from additional oral health care.

### Will there be other evidence-based plan design recommendations in the future?

Probably. Scientific understanding of the issues continues to grow. We will not rush to add options that are not solidly grounded in science, but we will monitor research and discussion within the dental science community and develop plan options that reflect consensus among those experts.

### What makes Delta Dental of Illinois' Enhanced Benefits Program special?

Delta Dental of Illinois' Enhanced Benefits Program integrates medical and dental care. The program customizes benefits at the individual level, offering additional services to individuals who have specific health conditions (diabetes, pregnancy, periodontal disease, kidney failure/undergoing dialysis, high-risk cardiac conditions, suppressed immune systems, cancer-related chemotherapy and/or radiation or are at risk for oral cancer) that can be positively affected by additional care.

### How do I know if my group offers Delta Dental of Illinois' Enhanced Benefits Program?

You can determine eligibility for the program through the Subscriber Connection on Delta Dental of Illinois' Web site at [www.deltadentalil.com](http://www.deltadentalil.com). If you are not already registered,

you will need to register. Registration is required to protect the confidentiality of your personal health information. To register you need to:

- Enter the primary subscriber's first and last name (the name must appear exactly as your employer entered it during enrollment, e.g., "Bob" may be "Robert"), subscriber ID or Social Security number (enter number with no dashes) and date of birth (enter two-digit month, two-digit date and four-digit year with dividers, e.g., 03/15/1984).
- Select a user name and password.
- Delta Dental of Illinois will send you a confirmation via email.
- Log on using your user name and password. Through the Subscriber Connection, you can also access claim, benefit and eligibility information, as well as print an ID card.

### How do I enroll?

- Go to the home page of Delta Dental of Illinois' Web site at [www.deltadentalil.com](http://www.deltadentalil.com).
- Click on the Subscriber section.
- Click on the "Enhanced Benefits Program" link. You must be a registered user of the Subscriber Connection to enroll for an enhanced benefit. Registration is easy. (See instructions in the previous question.)
- After you have successfully logged in, you will be able to enter or update the small amount of health information required to qualify for extra benefits for yourself or dependents. You and/or your dependents will be immediately eligible for those benefits.

- The periodontal disease health condition indicator will automatically be updated when non-surgical or surgical periodontal procedures are processed by Delta Dental of Illinois.
- You may also enroll by phone by calling Delta Dental of Illinois' Customer Service department at 800-323-1743. Hours are 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Central Time.

**If I have multiple conditions (e.g. diabetes and pregnancy), can I select both?**

Yes. You can select multiple conditions.

**How does Delta Dental of Illinois know when a pregnancy term expires?**

You (or your dentist) enter the due date at the time of enrollment. Our system will automatically end the eligibility for the enhanced benefits on that date, though claims submitted later with dates of service that fall during the pregnancy period will continue to be processed and paid.

**Is it harmful to expose some at-risk patients to additional dental treatments?**

It is important to note that the timing of treatment is critically important for at-risk individuals. As a result, their decision to receive treatment must be made in conjunction with their physician and dentist.

**What coverage will be provided?**

Our Enhanced Benefits Program includes additional cleanings and/or applications of topical fluoride. The program addresses the unique health challenges faced by people with conditions that put them at risk for oral health disease, and can also play an important role in the management of an individual's medical condition.

The costs of the additional cleanings and fluoride treatments will be applied to your annual maximum. The timing of treatment is very important when serious medical conditions exist. If you have one of these conditions, talk with your dentist and physician about if and when treatment is right for you.

**What's the health benefit?**

For people with a susceptibility to periodontal diseases, periodontal maintenance needs to be conducted at more frequent intervals to help prevent tooth loss, a complication of these diseases.

For diabetics, research has confirmed that diabetes worsens with periodontal diseases, and it strongly suggests that severe periodontal disease increases the severity of diabetes. Glycemic control has proven to be one of the best ways to prevent complications of diabetes. A number of studies strongly indicate that when people with diabetes receive more professional teeth cleanings, their blood glucose levels are much better controlled.

Clinical studies of pregnant women with periodontal disease strongly suggest that more frequent professional teeth cleanings will benefit the health of both the baby and the mother.

For people with high-risk cardiac conditions, a recent guideline by the American Heart Association indicates that an individual's overall 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. At-risk individuals can reduce bacteria levels in the mouth with more frequent cleanings in an effort to lower their risk for infective endocarditis.

For people with kidney failure, or who are undergoing chemotherapy and/or radiation or who have suppressed immune systems, it is well established scientifically that people with serious health conditions like these are at increased risk for infection, generally because their immune system response has been weakened. These people can benefit from having their teeth cleaned professionally at more frequent intervals to reduce the build-up of bacteria in the mouth. This may help lower the risk that this bacteria will enter the bloodstream, create infection and further compromise their health.

Head and neck radiation causes some specific additional 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 cancer treatment. Because a common side effect of head and neck radiation is an increase in cavities, the NIDCR recommends fluoride treatment and the use of prescription-strength fluoride toothpaste by those undergoing this treatment. Enrollees who are receiving this type of radiation should ask their dentist if they would benefit from prescription strength fluoride toothpaste. This product is often covered by medical/prescription drug benefit plans.

