



Taking care of your family's oral health

DELTA DENTAL OF VIRGINIA

 **DELTA DENTAL®**

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Delta Dental

THE DENTAL BENEFITS LEADER

Delta Dental of Virginia has been providing affordable dental benefits for more than 60 years. With more than 90 million people covered by Delta Dental nationally, you're in good company. And since we have the largest network of dentists nationwide,¹ it's likely your dentist already participates with us.

We believe in the power of a healthy smile and are proud to help protect yours.

Access your benefit information, or search for a dentist in your plan by logging in at DeltaDentalVA.com/members. You can also download our mobile app using the QR code. The same login works for both!





The value of dental benefits

Research shows that having dental benefits and using those benefits with regular visits to your dentist is essential to maintaining your overall health.

SAVE MONEY



Delta Dental negotiates lower fees with dentists so you pay less for dental care. Most Delta Dental plans cover preventive care, such as exams, cleanings and X-rays, at 100%.*

SAVE TIME



Our time-saving tools make it easy to find a dentist, estimate dental procedure costs and manage your dental benefits 24/7. Log in at **DeltaDentalVA.com** or use our mobile app for these features and more.

STAY HEALTHY



Families with dental benefits are more likely to get the preventive dental care they need. That is important because keeping your smile healthy is a critical component of your overall health.

Dental coverage means lower out-of-pocket costs for you, and Delta Dental has more discounts with dentists than any other dental carrier.

*Check your plan details, as coverage may vary.



See the savings add up

Let's compare annual dental care costs for a family of four with and without dental benefits. For two annual preventive visits and a cavity filled during the year per person:

WITHOUT DENTAL BENEFITS*

Annual premium	\$0
Preventive visits	\$1,400
Fillings	\$800
Total	\$2,200

WITH DENTAL BENEFITS*

Annual premium	\$1,200
Preventive visits	\$0
Fillings	\$280
Total	\$1,480

Total savings with dental benefits \$720

*Fees are for illustrative purposes only. Premium rates are dependent on your location and your plan type. See your plan limitations and exclusions for specific plan information. Check your plan details, as coverage may vary.

Oral health & wellness

Your oral health is connected to your overall well-being. Symptoms of more than 120 diseases may be detected by a dental exam.^{2,3} Below are just a few examples of the mouth and body connection.

BRAIN



Studies show links between gum disease bacteria and the advancement of Alzheimer's.⁴

HEART



Gum disease may increase the risk for heart disease, or make existing heart problems worse.⁴

KIDNEYS



Kidney disease may cause mouth problems, such as bad breath.⁵

LUNGS



Research found that gum disease bacteria may be linked to a higher risk of respiratory diseases.⁶

INTESTINES



Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) may lead to mouth ulcers.⁷

Studies show regular dental visits are important to maintaining your overall health. Choosing dental coverage, and using those benefits, helps support a healthy family.



Keep your dental team in the loop

Keeping your dental team informed about medical treatments may help mitigate side effects, especially for any of the following medical conditions:

- **Diabetes** — Gum disease may worsen in people with diabetes. Treatment can help with managing blood sugar.⁶
- **Pregnancy** — Gum disease may increase the risk of pre-term babies with low birth weights.⁸
- **Cardiac conditions** — Certain heart conditions may be negatively impacted by gum disease.⁶
- **Cancer treatment** — Radiation and chemotherapy may increase oral infections and cavities.⁹
- **Weakened immune systems** — A weaker immune system increases susceptibility to oral infections.¹⁰
- **Kidney disease** — Medications for kidney disease may cause mouth sores.⁵

Delta Dental's *Healthy Smile, Healthy You*[®] program offers additional benefits for these eligible conditions. Ask your human resources department if your plan includes this program.

If these benefits are available, and once you are enrolled in *Healthy Smile, Healthy You*, tell your dentist so they may adjust your preventive services, if recommended.



Babies

It's important to pay attention to your baby's oral health because tooth decay may begin soon after the first teeth appear. If you follow a few tips, you may reduce the likelihood of future damage.

ORAL HEALTH TIPS FOR BABIES

- Never allow a baby to fall asleep with a bottle, as that may invite tooth decay.
- Transition from bottle to cup soon after your baby's first birthday.
- After your baby eats, clean their gums with a damp cloth.

TEETHING

When the first teeth start to appear, it's time to schedule your baby's first dental appointment.¹¹ Teething is also an indication that it's time to start an oral health routine with your child. Encourage good oral health by brushing your baby's first teeth with a soft toothbrush and a smear of fluoride toothpaste.

Massaging your child's gums and offering solid, rubber teethers can help soothe discomfort during teething. Avoid liquid-filled teething rings, as they may break, and steer clear of numbing gels or homeopathic teething tablets or necklaces, as these could be a hazard.¹¹

Encourage healthy baby teeth, and healthy permanent teeth usually follow.



Toddlers

Toddlers are often eager to participate in their own care — so let them! Teach kids how to brush and floss by letting them do it themselves at first and then help them finish the job. By age five, children should be able to brush on their own.

YOUR CHILD'S FIRST DENTAL VISIT

By age one, your child should be ready for their first dental visit. Ease anxiety by telling your child what to expect. Your child's first appointments may include:

- An exam and cleaning
- A fluoride assessment
- A discussion about teething, pacifier use or finger sucking

WHY FLUORIDE?

Research shows that a lack of fluoride puts children at risk for weakened enamel and tooth decay. Your dentist will help you evaluate your child's fluoride needs to make sure they are receiving the recommended levels.

LIMIT SUGAR

In addition to being the main cause of cavities, sugar has also been linked to weight gain, obesity and type 2 diabetes.

Instill healthy habits by teaching children good oral health routines and how to limit sugar responsibly.¹²



Children

Cavities are preventable, yet they remain the number one chronic childhood disease. Brushing regularly with a soft-bristled toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste, and using a few simple tips, can help improve your child's oral health.¹³

BRUSHING TIPS FOR KIDS

- Create a daily oral health routine and stick to it.
- Reward good brushing behavior.
- Let kids pick out their toothbrush.
- Brush your teeth with your children!

SEALANTS

A dental sealant is a thin, invisible coating applied by your dentist to your child's back teeth. Applying the sealant is simple, can protect against cavities and is recommended by the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry.¹⁴

MONITOR SUGAR INTAKE

Sugar should be monitored as children grow. Limiting sugary drinks and foods goes a long way toward maintaining a healthy smile.¹³

When introduced early, positive oral health habits may help prevent costly oral health complications as adults.



Teens

Teenagers are eager to gain their independence and express individuality. As teenagers consider ways to express themselves, it's important to know a few oral health risks. And young athletes need to understand the importance of using protective sports gear to protect teeth, as well.

- Oral piercings may lead to serious infections, and metal jewelry may damage teeth.¹⁵
- If your teen is active or plays high-impact sports, wearing a mouthguard helps protect teeth from being damaged.
- Braces improve more than your smile. Crooked or crowded teeth may make it hard to eat or speak, and could lead to tooth decay, gum disease and tooth loss.¹⁶

EATING DISORDERS

Unfortunately, many teens may battle eating disorders, which can disrupt proper nutrition and cause permanent damage to their oral and overall health.

Pay attention to significant changes in your child's eating habits and if you have concerns, speak to your dentist or your child's medical health professional.¹⁷

Talk to your teen about the long-term health impacts that may result from short-term choices.



Men

Gum disease appears more often in men (56.4%) than women (38.4%).¹⁷ Data also shows men are less likely than women to visit a dentist. As a result, men are more likely to have more severe gum disease.

Gum disease occurs when untreated plaque hardens into tartar, causing a breakdown of the gums and leading to health consequences such as:

- Loose or separating teeth
- Persistent bad breath
- Red, swollen or bleeding gums

In addition, there are a few other medical conditions that may affect oral health that men should consider:

- Millions of adults take prescriptions that may cause dry mouth. Dry mouth increases the risk of cavities, but good oral hygiene and diet can help lessen dry mouth and its impact.
- Men with gum disease, especially those who are younger than 30 or older than 70, may be at increased risk of developing impotence.¹⁸
- Research indicates that gum disease and cardiovascular disease may be associated, and that gum disease may increase your risk of cardiovascular disease.¹⁸

Taking steps to curb gum disease with improved brushing and regular dental visits can go a long way to improve the oral health trend in men.¹⁸



Women

Every stage of a woman's life presents unique health challenges. Oral health is no exception, as it is also affected by changes that only women experience.

PUBERTY

During puberty, a surge in hormones may cause swollen gums, mouth lesions and ulcers, and young women may experience sensitive or easily irritated gums. It's important to stick with a healthy oral health routine, but if you experience persistent discomfort, speak to your dentist about what you can do to alleviate the symptoms.

CONTRACEPTIVES

Oral contraceptives, or birth control pills, may cause inflamed gum tissue that could develop into gingivitis. It's also important to know that birth control pills may increase the risk of dry socket after a tooth extraction, so be sure to mention to your dentist if you are taking birth control pills or any other medications before undergoing any dental procedures.¹⁹



Women

PREGNANCY

Pregnancy may increase inflammation of the gums. If plaque isn't removed regularly during pregnancy, gum disease may occur. Some studies indicate that women with persistent gum disease may be at risk for pre-term babies with low birth weights, so it's important to keep up those healthy oral habits, visit your dentist regularly and take advantage of additional dental benefits that may be available to you.⁸

Morning sickness may also cause tooth erosion due to increased acid from vomiting. Neutralize the acid by rubbing a paste of baking soda and water on teeth and be sure to mention morning sickness to your dentist as part of any concerns you may have.

Check with your human resources department to see if Delta Dental's *Healthy Smile, Healthy You*[®] has been included in your plan. During your pregnancy, *Healthy Smile, Healthy You* may provide additional benefits.

MENOPAUSE

Menopause may cause some women to experience significant dry mouth, burning sensations in the gums and changes in taste. During your oral exam, your dentist may perform a more elevated evaluation of the gums and may recommend tests that indicate salivary flow. It is important during this life stage to continue to maintain low levels of dental plaque through fluoride, brushing twice per day and flossing once per day.¹⁹

By prioritizing oral care, women may not only protect their teeth and gums, but also their overall health.



Seniors

As you age, it is important to maintain the same healthy oral habits you learned as a child, such as brushing twice daily, flossing at least once per day, using adequate amounts of fluoride and keeping up routine dental visits.

DRY MOUTH IN OLDER ADULTS

Salivary glands slow down as we age and may cause difficulty swallowing, tasting or speaking. The culprit of dry mouth is often prescription medications, but sometimes medical conditions may be the cause. If you are experiencing uncomfortable dry mouth symptoms, talk to your dentist.

ALZHEIMER'S AND ORAL HEALTH

Research suggests that poor oral health, especially gum disease, might increase the chance of getting Alzheimer's. A study found that people with gum disease were 1.5 times more likely to develop Alzheimer's compared to those with healthy gums. If you or a loved one is experiencing symptoms of dementia or Alzheimer's, be sure to include your dental team in your care.²⁰

CARING FOR DENTURES

Care for dentures as you would natural teeth. Brush daily and soak dentures in water or a denture cleaner overnight.

Oral care remains critical as we age. Dry mouth from medications or conditions may increase cavity risk. Discuss any symptoms you have with your dentist for solutions.

Your oral health, your choice

Choosing dental coverage couldn't be easier. With flexible, affordable dental plans, a customer service center ranked by BenchmarkPortal as a Top Contact Center²¹ and the nation's largest network¹ of dental providers, Delta Dental is committed to providing quality, cost-effective dental care.

- With the largest network of dentists, it's likely your dentist participates with us.¹
- Affordable, flexible dental benefits that work for you and your family.
- Award-winning customer service.
- Access to your dental benefits 24/7 at **DeltaDentalVA.com** or through the Delta Dental mobile app, available by searching Delta Dental on Android or Apple devices.

For more information or to find a participating dentist near you, visit **DeltaDentalVA.com**.

Delta Dental protects the smiles of millions of members. Choose benefits built from experience and let Delta Dental of Virginia give you something to smile about.

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