



News Release

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The Dental Checkup: Your Prevention Connection

Dental exams key to personal control of oral health

OAK BROOK, IL (March 27, 2007) – You take pretty good care of your teeth, brushing and flossing daily. You don't really have any major dental issues. Is it really necessary for you to schedule dental exams unless there's a problem?

Oral health professionals point out there are numerous reasons to keep those checkups on your calendar, even if you take good care of your teeth.

“Just because it's been awhile since you've had a cavity or a dental health issue, don't give up on those visits to the dentist,” said Dr. Max Anderson, DDS, a national oral health advisor for Delta Dental Plans Association. “Dental checkups continue to be an important part of taking good care of teeth, preventing problems and providing people with greater control of their oral health.”

Dental health professionals will suggest the frequency that's most appropriate for you. Some people don't need to be seen twice each year, while some need to be seen more often.

Preventive checkups provide dentists with opportunities to identify and intervene early in dental diseases. This can reduce any pain and the financial costs associated with more severe forms of dental diseases.

For example, periodontal diseases that go unnoticed for lack of a checkup can progress into more serious stages possibly resulting in pain, tooth loss and other problems. If caught early, periodontal disease is easier to manage and, in some cases, reverse.

Dental professionals can also use today's dental exams to screen for oral cancers and other health issues that can be difficult to spot on your own. More than 120 diseases can cause specific signs and symptoms in and around the mouth and jaw¹. Dental professionals performing checkups can spot symptoms that could indicate serious health problems elsewhere in the body that need attention.

The prevention connection extends to recent changes in your health. Checkups allow your dentist to keep up with changes to your health status. Upon learning of medical conditions you've developed or treatments you're receiving, your dentist can recommend strategies to help you proactively counter the negative effects the conditions and treatments would otherwise have on your oral health.

Visiting the dentist for exams is certainly easier if your employer has dental benefits. Most dental plans cover preventive care and a limited number of checkups each year. If you aren't getting dental coverage through your employer, ask your company's human resources department or benefits administrator if getting dental benefits is possible. Most employers, when briefed on the many business-friendly reasons for offering dental benefits, will recognize their worth.

"Your smile and your breath, the foods you can eat and social interactions are all enhanced through better oral health," said Dr. Anderson. "Dental checkups are a great investment in your oral and overall health."

Delta Dental Plans Association, based in Oak Brook, IL, is a national network of independent not-for-profit dental service corporations specializing in providing dental benefits programs to 47 million Americans in more than 81,000 employee groups throughout the country.

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¹ Steven L. Bricker, Robert P. Langlais, and Craig S. Miller, *Oral Diagnosis, Oral Medicine and Treatment Planning* (Philadelphia: Lea & Febiger, 1994).