

# Extra benefits when you need them!

Scientific research shows that oral health can have a significant impact on specific medical conditions.

Because of this connection, your Delta Dental coverage may include additional routine teeth cleanings (prophylaxes) or periodontal maintenance cleanings per benefit period (rather than the standard two) for people with certain at-risk conditions.

**Be sure to visit your dentist regularly for preventive care that can help keep your whole body healthy.**

## Diabetes and gum disease

Research has confirmed that diabetes worsens gum disease, and it strongly suggests that severe gum disease increases the severity of diabetes.<sup>1</sup> Studies strongly indicate that when people with diabetes receive more frequent professional teeth cleanings, their blood glucose levels are much better controlled.<sup>2</sup>



## Pregnancy and gum disease

High maternal levels of the bacteria that causes cavities may contribute to low infant birth weight.<sup>3</sup> Some studies have shown that women with periodontal disease may be up to 7.5 times more likely to have a pregnancy complication.<sup>3</sup> In addition, premature babies are much more likely to have long-term—and costly—health problems than those who are born full term. Regular dental visits during pregnancy are good for the mom and baby.



## Individuals at risk for infective endocarditis

Despite medical advances, there is still a 20 percent mortality rate from infective endocarditis, a potentially deadly heart infection.<sup>4</sup> The American Heart Association states that good oral health is an important factor in reducing the risk for infective endocarditis.<sup>5</sup>



## Other at-risk conditions

People with serious health conditions are often at an increased risk for infection due to weakened immune system response.<sup>6</sup> Having teeth cleaned professionally more frequently helps lower the risk that bacteria will enter the bloodstream, create infection and further compromise their condition.



Head and neck radiation causes some specific oral health problems. The National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research encourages people to see a dentist before beginning cancer treatments.<sup>7</sup> A common side effect of head and neck radiation is an increase in cavities.

Based on this evidence, enhanced coverage is available for:

- People with renal failure or who are undergoing dialysis
- People whose immune systems are suppressed because of:
  - Chemotherapy and/or radiation treatment
  - HIV positive status
  - Organ transplant
  - Stem cell (bone marrow) transplant



If you have one or more of the conditions listed above, ask your dentist and physician how you can better manage your oral health to prevent infection and improve your condition.

- 1 National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, "Diabetes and Oral Health," web.
- 2 Teeuw, WJ, Gerdes, EA and Loos, BG, "Effect of Periodontal Treatment on Glycemic Control of Diabetic Patients: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis," *Diabetes Care* 33 (2010): 421-27.
- 3 "CDC, "Pregnancy and Oral Health," web.
- 4 Cleveland Clinic Center for Continuing Education, "Infective Endocarditis," web.
- 5 WebMD, "Dental Health and Endocarditis Prevention," web.
- 6 Healthline, "Immunodeficiency Disorders," web.
- 7 National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, "Head and Neck Radiation Treatment and Your Mouth," web.