



Periodontal (Gum) Disease

To help control periodontal disease, Delta Dental of Illinois' Smile Smart for Your Health Enhanced Benefits Program includes coverage for four periodontal maintenance visits per year or two periodontal maintenance visits and two general cleanings to help treat at-risk persons with periodontal disease.

Most patients with recurrent inflammation of the gingival tissues (gingivitis) without bone loss are adequately treated with one or two cleanings per year. In these cases, a dental prophylaxis (general cleaning) will preserve the periodontal tissues.

For patients with a history of susceptibility to periodontal diseases or periodontal surgery, periodontal maintenance needs to be conducted at more frequent intervals. Statistical modeling and Delta Dental's analysis of its own claims data show that these non-surgical benefits are more economical than periodontal surgery.

These procedures are also health-preserving and reduce tooth loss compared to those periodontal patients who do not receive these therapies. Tooth loss is a major expense in the dental system because tooth replacement costs are great whether the tooth is replaced by a conventional bridge or a dental implant.

Risk Factors & Warning Signs

The American Dental Association offers the following information regarding risk factors for periodontal disease and tips for identifying the condition.

Some factors increase the risk of developing periodontal disease, including:

- Tobacco smoking or chewing
- Systemic diseases such as diabetes
- Some types of medication such as steroids, some types of anti-epilepsy drugs, cancer therapy drugs, and some calcium channel blockers
- Bridges that no longer fit properly
- Crooked teeth
- Fillings that have become defective
- Pregnancy or use of oral contraceptives

The following warning signs can signal a problem:

- Gums that bleed easily
- Red, swollen, tender gums
- Gums that have pulled away from the teeth
- Persistent bad breath or bad taste
- Permanent teeth that are loose or separating
- Any change in the way that teeth fit together while biting
- Any change in the fit of partial dentures

It is possible to have periodontal disease and have no warning signs. That is one reason why regular dental checkups and periodontal examinations are very important. Treatment methods depend upon the type of disease and how far the condition has progressed. Good oral hygiene at home is essential to help keep periodontal disease from becoming more serious or recurring. Periodontal disease doesn't have to end in tooth loss. Brushing, flossing, eating a balanced diet, and scheduling regular dental visits can make the difference for a lifetime of healthy smiles.