

Healthy smiles for a lifetime: Basics of preventive dental care



We'll do whatever it takes and then some.

The true cost of a cavity

Did you know that the cost of a cavity over your lifetime can run as high as \$2,000? And did you know that most cavities can be avoided with easy and routine preventive care — including a regular dental health regimen, fluoridation and sealants?

Delta Dental plans have always emphasized diagnostic and preventive benefits, such as coverage for checkups so that you keep your mouth healthy and need fewer restorative services.

The daily routine

Many oral health problems, such as gum disease and tooth decay, can be prevented by a simple routine: brushing twice a day, flossing daily, eating a balanced diet and having regular dental checkups.

- Plaque is a sticky, colorless film that builds up on teeth every day. Bacteria in plaque produce acids that attack your teeth. To remove plaque buildup, brush your teeth twice a day with fluoridated toothpaste. The recommended brushing time is two to three minutes.
- Daily flossing helps remove plaque from places your toothbrush can't reach. If you find floss difficult to work with, use a floss holder, which can help insert floss in between teeth.
- Avoid starchy and sugary foods, which increase plaque. A healthy diet provides the nutrients necessary to prevent gum disease (vitamins A and C, in particular).
- Avoid cigarettes and chewing tobacco, which may contribute to gum disease and oral cancer.

Fluoride

Fluoride is a beneficial and cost-effective way to prevent tooth decay in children and adults, according to the American Dental Association (ADA). Fluoride is a compound of the element fluorine, which is present naturally in many foods and in water, soil and air.

According to the ADA, public water fluoridation is considered the most efficient and cost-effective way to prevent cavities. However, other sources of fluoridation need to be considered as a number of states or counties still don't have fluoridated tap water and many people drink bottled water.

If you or your children don't ingest much fluoridated water, here are some ways to add more fluoride to your diet:

- Use a fluoride toothpaste and mouth rinse and/or professionally-applied gels or varnishes.