PERIODONTAL SERVICES SHOW STRONG BENEFITS FOR DIABETES MANAGEMENT

Delta Dental recognizes the importance of managing periodontal diseases in diabetic patients, and advocates increased availability of periodontal services for people affected by this chronic disease. In order to provide access to appropriate levels of care, Delta Dental recommends covering periodontal maintenance at a frequency up to 4 times per year. This level of care promotes the elimination or reduction of periodontal infections in diabetic patients, providing a direct and positive effect on their oral health.

As the fifth-deadliest disease in the United States, diabetes is one of our nation’s heaviest health burdens. The American Diabetes Association estimates that nearly 21 million children and adults in America are living with diabetes, either diagnosed (15 million) or undiagnosed (6 million), with an additional 41 million Americans with pre-diabetes.

The relationship between diabetes and oral health, specifically periodontal disease, is well accepted in the medical and dental communities. Observational studies have consistently reported evidence of a greater prevalence, incidence, severity, extent or progression of periodontal disease in diabetics. These studies also show that diabetic patients experience periodontal destruction at an earlier age than non-diabetic individuals.1,2

Population-based epidemiological studies, reinforced by clinical studies, have confirmed the association between diabetes and periodontal disease on the microbiological level and have proposed biochemical models to explain the relationship. For example, Salvi et al.3 demonstrated that diabetes represents an increased risk for periodontal disease by a factor of 2.1 to 3.0.

Beyond the established role of diabetes worsening periodontal disease, researchers have hypothesized that severe periodontal disease increases the severity of diabetes mellitus and complicates metabolic control. A number of intervention studies have shown that treatment of periodontal disease improves glycemic control.4,5 The association between the elimination of periodontal infection and improved glycemic control in diabetic patients lends support to the bi-directional models where diabetes increases periodontal disease incidence and severity, and where severe periodontal disease increases the severity of diabetes and complicates metabolic control.

Delta Dental’s knowledgeable sales staff can help you implement these recommendations. Modernizing dental benefits to reflect our current knowledge of the best science is one of the ways Delta Dental helps employers manage the health of their employees and their employees' families. Appropriately providing added cleanings and periodontal maintenance visits to patients with diabetes is one way of improving health and lowering costs.

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