PATIENTS AT RISK OF PERIODONTAL DISEASE BENEFIT FROM MORE FREQUENT DENTAL VISITS

Patients who are susceptible to periodontal diseases generally require more frequent periodontal maintenance than those who are not susceptible. To help control periodontal disease, Delta Dental recommends four periodontal maintenance visits per year (benefit period) for those individuals with a moderate to high risk of progressive periodontal diseases.

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 will preserve the periodontal tissues.

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

When selecting individuals within a group for added benefits, Delta Dental recommends that patients with a history of periodontal surgery be offered four periodontal maintenance visits per year as part of their dental benefits. Approximately one percent of all Delta Dental enrollees fall into this category annually. Cumulatively, this will encompass about 10 percent of a normal group’s members.

Delta Dental’s knowledgeable sales staff can help you implement one or both of 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 those at risk for progressive periodontal diseases is one way of improving health and lowering costs.

---

5 Delta Dental Data Analysis Center, 2004