

# Benefits Spotlight

NEWS FOR *You*. NEWS TO *Share*.

## Mid-year check-in: Don't miss out on your benefits

Summer is upon us. That means we're about halfway through the benefits year, which is a great time to check on whether you're taking full advantage of your dental and vision benefits.

Remember, dental and vision benefits don't roll over from one year to the next: If you don't use them, you lose them! Below are a few ways you can ensure that come December 31, you'll have gotten the most out of your Delta Dental of Iowa benefits.

### Get your family's dental visits on the calendar

Delta Dental of Iowa plans cover two preventive dental visits each year, so get the first one on the books soon to take full advantage of this benefit. If you and your family have already had one dental visit, get everyone's second appointment on the calendar for six months after the first one.

### Schedule vision exams

Summer is a great time to schedule a vision exam, especially for families. Getting your kids' eyes checked during the summer will help them see clearly in time for the next school year. Staying on top of vision health is important for kids, as blurry vision can lead to headaches and learning problems at school. And if you haven't scheduled a vision appointment this year, call your vision provider to get one on the books.

### Be strategic about big procedures

If your dentist recommends a major procedure, now is the time to get the details on cost and timing. Some services need to be completed across more than one appointment. It may make sense to have all appointments within a calendar year, but you may want to have part of the service in the following calendar year if you're worried about going over your annual maximum. Getting the details now from your doctor will help you game plan the best strategy for you.

### Plan ahead for next year

Mid-year is a great time to start thinking about the insurance changes, if any, you'd like to make during open enrollment in the fall. Schedule time to meet with your Human Resources team or benefits manager to discuss your options and make an informed plan.

**Looking for a new provider? Start here.**

You can't fully access your benefits without the right providers in place. If you need a new dentist or eye care professional, we can help you find an in-network provider. Visit our online [Find a Provider tool](#) to locate a quality dentist near you, and check out our simple search tool to [locate a DeltaVision eye doctor](#).

Delta Dental of Iowa supports your preventive health by encouraging you to take full advantage of the preventive care benefits covered by your plan – and we hope you apply these tips with your other health and wellness employee benefits. If you have any questions about your benefits, our Customer Service team is happy to help. Give us a call at the back of your Delta Dental of Iowa ID card or fill out our [online form](#).

REFERENCE:

[American Optometric Association](#)

## Floss focus: Is string not your thing?

If there's one part of a dental cleaning that brings out anxiety and discomfort, it's when your dentist asks, "How often are you flossing?"

If your bleeding gums don't give you away, you might be inclined to slip a white lie. It's hard to estimate how many adults actually floss, but studies estimate that only about 30% of adults over age 30 floss daily.

Using traditional string floss can be difficult for many people. And when something is hard to use, you stop using it. Fortunately, dental product manufacturers have used this challenge to spark some innovative string floss alternatives that are now on the market.

But before we get to those, it begs the question: Why is flossing so important?

### Why you should floss

Flossing once a day is an effective way to prevent cavities and gum disease between your twice-yearly dental appointments.

Other benefits of flossing include:

- Floss can reach between teeth, along the gumline and below the gumline better than your toothbrush. These are areas where bacteria can settle, form plaque and cause problems (like gum disease or cavities).
- Adding flossing to your toothbrushing routine is the best way to get rid of the bacteria that causes bad breath, compared with brushing alone.
- Regular flossing keeps your gums looking and feeling healthy by reducing bleeding, swelling and pain.

### String floss alternatives

If you know you won't use string floss, check out some of the traditional floss alternatives below.

### **Interdental brushes**

If wrapping string floss between your fingers is challenging, check out interdental brushes. These little brushes are designed to fit between your teeth, and they're very effective at scrubbing away plaque. Interdental brushes aren't as well known as floss, but there are many interdental floss products on the market with various lengths and types so you can find one that fits your needs.

### **Toothpicks and floss picks**

Before you grab a household or restaurant toothpick to floss your teeth, know that there are better options that work just like a regular toothpick but may be even more comfortable. You can purchase dental plaque removers in different materials (wood or rubber, for example) or wooden cleaning sticks that are approved by the American Dental Association (ADA). You can also find floss picks, which are similar to a toothpick as it has a toothpick on one end, but the other end has a small bit of floss held between two posts. These disposable products may be easier to maneuver than string floss.

### **Water and air flossers**

Water and air flossers – sometimes called oral irrigators – are electronic products that use water pressure (from a thin, targeted stream of water) or air pressure (from a thin stream of air with water droplets) to clear away plaque between your teeth. These devices take up more space, require more maintenance and are more expensive than traditional string floss. But, if you're more apt to use an oral irrigator than string floss, it's well worth it.

### **Dental tape**

Dental tape is exactly like what it sounds: It's a wide, flat, tape-looking product that you may find is easier to grip than a thin string. You use it in the same fashion as string floss, sliding it between teeth and scrubbing away debris. If you have a hard time holding on to string floss, dental tape may be a great option for you.

### **Fun floss facts**

*When was floss invented?* Floss was invented in New Orleans in 1815.

*When's the best time to floss?* Before bedtime, but there's no bad time to floss.

*What comes first: brushing or flossing?* Floss comes first! Flossing dislodges food stuck on the teeth and gums, then your toothbrush brushes it away.

### **Floss like a boss by your next dental visit**

Finding the right floss is a big deal for your oral health. The best flossing product for you is the one you will routinely use. If you know using string floss isn't going to fit into your at-home dental hygiene routine, then it's important to explore other options to keep your teeth clean. Plus, the next time you visit your dentist and they ask if you're flossing, you can say a resounding "yes!"

### **REFERENCES:**

[The New York Times](#)

[Colgate](#)

[National Center for Biotechnology Information](#)

[University of Illinois Chicago College of Dentistry](#)

[Delta Dental Grin Magazine](#)