

Benefits Spotlight

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

Keeping You Covered: Preventive Dental Care

After a summer full of sweets, back-to-school season is a great time to make sure your kids' smiles are healthy. Proper preventive dental care – including regular dental exams, cleanings, fluoride treatments and sealants – helps ensure a lifetime of healthy smiles.

Delta Dental's Preventive Dental Care Study* found:

- **Less than one-third (29%)** of children younger than 3 years old had any dental service.
- **Three-fourths (75%)** of children ages 3–18 did not receive any dental service.
- **More than one-fourth (26%)** of children up to age 18 are at high risk for tooth decay.
- **Nearly 65 percent** of high-risk children did not receive two fluoride treatments per year.
- **More than 85 percent** of high-risk children ages 10–14 did not receive sealants on their second molars.
- **Nearly 67 percent** of high-risk children ages 6–9 did not receive sealants on their first molars.

Preventing or addressing dental issues before they get worse is much less expensive than treating severe dental problems. Plus, most Delta Dental plans cover preventive care with no or a low deductible.

*Delta Dental's Preventive Dental Care Study is an annual study that investigates whether high-risk children and adults receive the preventive care they need. For the calendar year 2014, the study analyzed more than 97 million dental claims. For more information on the study, visit deltadental.com/pdcstudy

Readers Ask, We Answer

Ellie writes: “My jaw has been really sore lately, almost as if I chewed gum for hours on end. I thought about my habits and can't figure out a reason for the pain. What might have caused it, and what can I do to feel better?”

We answer: Hi, Ellie. Jaw discomfort can certainly be a pain in the neck – or mouth, as the case may be. Sore jaws may have a number of different causes, one being temporomandibular joint disorders (TMD). These joints are the two that connect your jaw to your skull near your ear. When the many muscles that attach to these joints aren't working in harmony, they can become sore and cause chronic jaw pain, painful clicking or popping and

a change in how your upper and lower teeth fit together. Though science isn't sure what causes TMD, it's possible that stress is a factor.

Tooth grinding, also known as bruxism, may be the culprit if you experience headaches, neck aches or earaches in addition to your jaw pain. Many people unknowingly grind their teeth, especially while sleeping. Over-the-counter pain medication, such as ibuprofen, may help relieve your discomfort. You should also skip hard, crunchy or chewy foods and avoid extreme jaw movements such as yawning, opening your mouth wide and chewing gum. To relieve stress, try relaxation techniques including meditation, stretching and deep breathing exercises.

Be sure to discuss your jaw pain with your dentist – he or she can assess wear patterns and jaw alignment to determine the cause. In the case of bruxism, your dentist may recommend a nighttime mouthguard to help prevent tooth damage and erosion.