

# Benefits Spotlight

News for *You*. News to *Share* with your Employees.

## Help Employees Get the Most from Dental Benefits

Dental benefits are an essential part of a competitive employee benefits package—after all, dental health affects overall health. But when employees skip one (...or more) twice-yearly dentist visits, they not only leave valuable dental benefits on the table, they risk having small dental issues turn into major problems.

Preventive care is important but easy to overlook. Why should I go to the dentist when my teeth look and feel fine? Additionally, benefits can be hard to navigate, so your employees may need help understanding their coverage.

As an employer, you not only have the ability to offer important dental benefits but also can inspire your employees to take full advantage of their coverage. Below are some ideas you can use to show your support of your employees' total health.

### Put It in Writing

Does your company produce an employee newsletter? If not, you no doubt send out occasional email updates to keep all employees informed on updates or to share company-wide announcements. Whatever platform you use, include information about how to take full advantage of dental benefits.

How can you squeeze dental benefits into the conversation? Here are a few ideas:

- You can note upcoming awareness days/months like National Children's Dental Health Month in February or National Dental Hygiene Month in October, which will remind your employees why dental care is so essential to overall health.
- During cold and flu season, add a reminder to get a new toothbrush after an illness (or at least every 3 months).
- Add a dental health assessment quiz, such as the [LifeSmile Assessment Quiz](#), to help motivate employees.

Or, simply share a straightforward message to inspire action among your employees: "Don't leave your benefits on the table! Your dental benefit covers twice-yearly dental visits for you and your dependents, so make an appointment today."

### **Include Kids in Your Communications**

Did you know that parents miss, on average, more than two days of work a year because of unexpected dental care for their children? Proactively scheduling preventive exams for children is important to keeping problems at bay, so don't forget to encourage employees to schedule appointments for their kids, too.

### **Incentivize Good Dental Habits**

From giving employees time off for dentist visits to organizing wellness challenges that incorporate points for good dental habits, employers have a wealth of ways to support their employees' health.

Rewarding employees who attend their twice-yearly dentist visits with a gift card or other form of recognition will inspire other employees to schedule their preventive appointments.

At the end of the day, employees want to know that their employer cares about them. Show your employees that you are invested in their health and happiness by educating them on the benefits you provide. These tips will help your employees and their families can take full advantage of their benefits and protect their long-term dental health.

## **How Vaping Harms Oral and Vision Health**

As more people look to kick their smoking habits, e-cigarettes—or vaping—have emerged as a way to ease people off tobacco. Although e-cigarettes still contain nicotine, these products are marketed as a healthier alternative to traditional cigarettes. But are e-cigarettes healthy? Emerging evidence points to the contrary.

Most notably, e-cigarettes containing THC, the “high”-inducing ingredient in marijuana, have been linked to serious lung disease resulting in death. In 2019, the Centers for the Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued a statement recommending that people do not use vaping products containing THC.

Lung illnesses aren't the only potential complications linked to e-cigarettes. The products pose risks to your oral and vision health, too.

### **What Are e-Cigarettes?**

Also known as e-cigs, vape-pens, vapes or e-hookahs, e-cigarettes have a sleek, subtle design (like a pen or flash drive). The products heat a liquid containing nicotine, flavorings, chemicals and/or drugs (like marijuana) that users breathe into their lungs.

### **How Vaping May Harm Dental Health**

Research has linked vaping to increased cavities and gum disease. One study that focused on vaping with flavored pods, which contain sugar-like sweet flavors that many teens and young users prefer, showed that the aerosol produced four times more bacteria adhesion to tooth enamel and a 27% decrease in enamel hardness. Increased bacteria on the teeth and soft enamel increase the likelihood of tooth decay and gum disease.



Although many flavored pods were federally banned in early 2020 to curb use by teens, flavors are still available on the market that may produce these harmful effects.

Evidence has also directly linked vaping to gingivitis (gum inflammation) and periodontal disease (which may result in your teeth to loosen from the bone and fall out). Other oral health implications include dry mouth; throat, tongue and lip pain and irritation; and bad breath. Many of these problems are caused by dehydration, so drinking water will help reduce these side effects.

### **How Vaping May Harm Vision Health**

Although several studies have directly linked vaping to oral health complications, no

studies have yet connected e-cigarettes with vision problems. However, nicotine has been shown to cause several vision diseases, such as glaucoma, cataracts and age-related macular degeneration.

Because nicotine is used in e-cigarettes, it's important to tell your eye doctor that you use vaping products.

### **Safely Quit Nicotine Products**

Vaping is a relatively new phenomenon, so more research is needed to truly understand its safety profile. However, vaping has been associated with several—and, in some cases, life-threatening—diseases.

If you've relied on e-cigarettes to help you quit smoking, do not go back to cigarettes. Talk to your doctor or dentist about safe and effective ways to quit nicotine products. Another smart step toward protecting your health is to keep regular vision and dental appointments, which go a long way in detecting potential health issues before they become major problems.

**SOURCE:** [https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic\\_information/e-cigarettes/-severe-lung-disease.html](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/-severe-lung-disease.html)