



Brand New Enhanced Dental Benefit for 2007

Lee County is announcing a brand new dental benefit to Aetna plan members. You are eligible for enhanced dental services if you:

- Are pregnant; or
- Have cerebrovascular disease; coronary artery disease (heart disease); or diabetes; AND
- Are covered under both the county medical and dental plans.

If the above conditions are met, the following dental services will be considered Covered Dental Expenses:

- One additional cleaning per year;
- Deep cleanings called scaling and root planing;
- Full mouth debridement;
- Periodontal maintenance (one additional treatment per year); and
- Localized delivery of antimicrobial agents (NOT COVERED FOR PREGNANCY)

With respect to the additional cleaning, the benefit will be payable the same as other cleanings under the plan.

With respect to the other dental services above, the Payment Percentage applied to these Covered Dental Expenses will be 100% and will not be subject to any deductible or frequency limits.

The Plan will reimburse the provider directly, or you may pay the provider directly and then submit a claim for reimbursement for covered expenses.

Benefits payable for the additional dental services will count towards any applicable Calendar Year Maximum.

Periodontal Disease

Periodontal (gum) diseases, including gingivitis and periodontitis, are serious gum infections that, left untreated, can lead to tooth loss. Periodontal disease is an infection that affects the gums and bone supporting the teeth. If you have gum disease, conditions such as pregnancy, heart disease or diabetes can be complicated by inflammation, which causes heat, redness, pain, and swelling. A recent article in *Consumer Reports on Health* stated that researchers have found that inflammation can increase your chances of developing certain diseases, such as heart disease and diabetes. Another article in the *Wall Street Journal* stated that early prevention and treatment of gum disease may result in significantly improved outcomes for pregnancy, heart disease and diabetes, often leading to substantial medical-cost savings.

Prevention

To keep your teeth and gums healthy you must remove plaque everyday by brushing and flossing. Regular dental visits are also important. Daily cleaning will help keep tartar build-up to a minimum, but it won't completely prevent it. A professional cleaning at least twice a year is necessary to remove tartar from places your toothbrush and floss may have missed. The new dental benefit allows you to receive an additional, third cleaning if you have cerebrovascular disease, heart disease or diabetes, or are pregnant.

Treatment

Treatment for gum disease often involves a procedure called scaling and root planing. Scaling and root planing involves a deep cleaning of your teeth and gums to remove plaque and tartar. It also helps to remove bacterial toxins from your teeth and gums.

Pregnancy

Research has shown that pregnant women who have gum disease may be seven times more likely to have a baby that is born too early and too small. By preventing and treating gum disease, you can significantly reduce your chances of having a baby that is born too early and is too small. The American Academy of Periodontology (AAP) says that the treatment of gum disease in pregnant women improves oral health and is safe.

Diabetes

According to the AAP, if you have diabetes then you are more likely to have gum disease than someone without diabetes, probably because diabetics are more likely to get infections. Severe gum disease can increase blood sugar, which puts diabetics at increased risk for diabetic problems. If you are a diabetic and develop gum disease, the AAP recommends that you get treated to get rid of the infection.

Heart Disease & Stroke

If you have gum disease, you are almost twice as likely to suffer from heart disease as someone without gum disease. Gum disease can also make existing heart problems worse. According to the AAP, if you have gum disease your chances of having a stroke may also increase.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I know if I qualify for the enhanced dental benefit?

If you are 1) pregnant; or have heart disease, cerebrovascular disease, or diabetes; AND 2) are covered under BOTH the Aetna medical and dental plans, then you are eligible to receive these enhanced dental benefits.

What is my risk of developing gum disease?

The American Academy of Periodontology provides a risk self-assessment tool that tells you what your chances of developing gum disease are. To access this short questionnaire, go to <http://www.perio.org/consumer/4a.html>.

When should I use the enhanced dental benefits?

You should talk to your dentist about scheduling a third cleaning if you have cerebrovascular disease, heart disease or diabetes, or are pregnant or planning to become pregnant. Additionally, make an appointment with your dentist if you have any signs of gum disease. Some signs to look out for include red, swollen, or tender gums; gums that have pulled away from the teeth; or bad breath that doesn't go away.

Source: American Academy of Periodontology www.perio.org