Stay Healthy and Save Money with Preventive Dental Care

Did you know that every dollar you spend on preventive care such as brushing and cleaning may help save you money later in restorative care and emergency procedures? It's true—keeping your teeth and gums healthy by seeing your dentist regularly can help you avoid more serious oral health problems and more extensive—and expensive—treatment.

Follow these strategies to remain healthy and help save dental costs:

1. **See a dentist regularly**. Doing so can help ensure that problems are taken care of before they become more serious and expensive.

2. Choose a dentist who belongs to your plan's network. Switching from a dentist who isn't in the plan to one who is enrolled will likely save you money.

3. Take advantage of any exams, teeth cleanings, or X-rays your insurance may cover. Getting regular dental checkups, such as cleanings and exams, will prevent dental complications or worsening of dental problems such as cavities.

4. Take good care of your teeth. Here are some recommendations from the American Dental Association (ADA):

- Gently brush your teeth at least twice daily and floss at least every day. When brushing, pay special attention to the gum line. Adults and children should use toothpaste with fluoride. Children under age 6 should use only a pea-size amount. According to the ADA, both electric and manual toothbrushes are effective. Choose the type that's easiest for you to use. Children may enjoy brushing with an electric toothbrush.

- Children and adolescents should have a sealant applied to their teeth to help prevent cavities; your dentist can advise you on the appropriate age for sealants.

- Eat a healthy diet, drink plenty of fluoridated water, and limit snacking on sugary or starchy foods. (Chewing sugarless gum after a snack may help prevent tooth decay.)

- Don't smoke. Smoking increases your risk for gum disease and tooth loss.