

EMPLOYER UPDATE



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DELTA DENTAL OF NEBRASKA REACHES OUT TO LOCAL COMMUNITY

As a non-profit organization, Delta Dental of Nebraska is dedicated to supporting the community through scholarships, sponsorships and more. We are especially focused on promoting the oral health of Nebraskans.

Here's a summary of our philanthropy on an ongoing basis:

- DDNE has established an endowed scholarship fund for the Creighton University Medical Center School of Dentistry.
- DDNE is the primary sponsor of the Dr. Ben Kutler Memorial Golf Outing. Proceeds go toward sponsoring dental care at the Creighton University Dental Clinic for local residents who can not afford dental care.
- DDNE supports the Omaha Area Food Banks' "Food for the Holidays" program by making a holiday contribution in honor of our top-producing brokers.
- DDNE partners with Valmont Industries to sponsor their annual United Way Golf Outing.
- DDNE funded the Omaha Dental Society's exhibit at the KidzExplore booth. This is an annual event for local children that promotes good physical and mental health care. The booth offered a variety of oral health information and products and visits by Delta Dental's Tooth Fairy.



ASK BARB

Barbara Jensen is district manager at Delta Dental of Nebraska. If you have questions you would like us to address in Employer Update, please send them to Cathy O'Connell, Editor, at coconnell@deltadentalne.org.



Question:

What is the best way to contact Delta Dental of Nebraska?

Answer:

There are three easy ways to reach us, depending on your reason: our website, the Employer Services line and our Customer Service line.

DDNE Website

Our website at www.deltadentalne.org provides access to provider directories, online enrollment, oral health tips, questions and answers, forms and more.

It also links to an interactive Dentist Search. You may search for participating dentists by location, dentist or clinic name. To receive a current list of dentists in your area, simply input city and state or zip code. You can also narrow your search by specialty.

Employer Services

We want you to get answers to all your post-sale questions as fast as possible. That's why Employer Services, a division of our Customer Service department, is dedicated to assisting you with important issues including enrollment, billing, claims, benefits, and identification (ID) card and Summary Plan Description (SPD) orders.

Dial **1-866-318-9449**, exclusively for Group Administrators and Brokers, to quickly reach an expert. At the prompt, choose Option 1 for Paper Enrollment, Option 2 for Electronic and Online Enrollment, Option 3 for Billing, or Option 4 for the Group Administrator and Broker Helpline.

Customer Service

Our Customer Service representatives provide the highest level of service. Last year, we answered subscribers' calls at an average speed of 10 seconds.

Subscribers should feel free to call us at **1-866-827-3319** Monday-Friday, 7 a.m.-7 p.m. CT for questions including benefits and eligibility, claims, dentists, EOBs, address changes and ID cards.

SMART SNACKING—TREATS CAN BE TREACHEROUS

Most of us are confronted every day with numerous opportunities to indulge in an endless variety of candy and sweet snacks. Whether it's the last morsel of chocolate cake in the office break room, candy filled office vending machines, desk top candy jars, or a frosted cake at a child's birthday party, the choice to indulge or not indulge is an ongoing reality. However satisfying they might be, sweet snacks aren't without some dangers to your teeth. And, it might be surprising to know that candy and sweet snacks aren't the only culprit. Often there are hidden sugars in many snacks.

What you can't see can hurt you!

Snacks almost always include sugars and starches. The bacteria which cause tooth decay are constantly at work, creating a sticky film on the surface of the teeth and the gums. Sugar (which comes in many forms) and starch act as fuel for these bacteria, leading to the formation of acid that can aggressively attack tooth surfaces if left for 20 minutes or more. Starchy snacks can also break down into sugars once they are in your mouth. With each acid attack, tooth enamel is broken down and the tooth surface can be weakened, which can result in dental decay.

One of the important functions of saliva is that it helps to wash the tooth surface and to clear bacteria. Bacteria are persistent, however, and extensive and prolonged snacking

can result in saliva being overwhelmed by microbes. The American Dental Association has indicated that the stickier things are, like fruit cake and gummy bears, the less likely they'll be washed out from between the teeth by saliva. Any kind of candy that sticks to your teeth is more harmful than a chocolate bar that gets washed away. Properly cleaning your teeth can prevent tooth decay, gum disease, and possible tooth loss.

The daily reality for children with untreated oral disease is often persistent pain, inability to eat comfortably or chew well, embarrassing discolored and damaged teeth, and distraction from play and learning. Adults can suffer the same consequences.

Should you cut out snacks all together?

It's not realistic to completely eliminate snacks from your diet, at least not in one fell swoop. Doing so would be particularly difficult around the holidays, at birthday parties and in the office. In fact, snacks can offer important vitamins and minerals. Careful selection of the snacks you eat can play a role in healthy teeth. Some of the worst snacks are sugary or starchy snacks you nibble on for prolonged periods of time that give the bacteria in plaque a longer opportunity to make acids that cause tooth decay. There are things you can do to minimize your risk of promoting dental disease, both for yourself and for your children.

(continued on next page)

SMART SNACKING (CONTINUED)

Tips to minimize the risk of dental decay

First, keep in mind that candy isn't the only culprit. Pizza, bread products, including hamburger buns, and many beverages contain sugars. Brown sugar, honey, molasses, and syrups also react with bacteria in the mouth to produce acids. All these foods are potentially damaging to teeth. Remember, too, that healthy meals and snacks should include a variety of foods from the basic food groups such as: fruits and vegetables, whole grains, milk and dairy products, meat, nuts and seeds. Grain products like bread, even some fresh fruits, if eaten in excess, may promote tooth decay.



Other snack tips include:

- Choose sugary foods less often. When you do consume sweets, try to do so during meals. Saliva production increases during meals and helps neutralize acid production and rinse food particles from the mouth.
- Slice up bananas, strawberries, and kiwi for a colorful and tasty snack. Toddlers love finger foods.
- Drink water instead of any sugary drink. Water simply can't be beat for a healthy drink. It does an excellent job of rinsing the teeth, diluting the acids, and when fluoridated, can actually promote the growth and development of stronger teeth.
- Choose nutritious foods such as fresh fruits and raw vegetables, whole grains, dairy products, meat and nuts for in between snacks. Consider chewing sugarless gum afterwards. Sugarless gum is another way of promoting saliva production. It's also a good idea to drink optimally fluoridated water with your snacks. (If you choose bottled water, check the label for fluoride content). As an alternative, choose a beverage that's low in sugar and acids.
- Brush your teeth at least twice daily, and after snacking whenever possible. Keep a toothbrush in your desk drawer or put one in your back pack or purse. Use fluoridated toothpaste and floss daily. ADA accepted dental products are recommended.
- Floss daily or use another kind of interdental cleaner to remove plaque from in between teeth.
- See your dentist for regular check ups.

Before you reach for your next snack—whether it is for yourself or your child, be mindful about the selection you have made. Ask yourself if it is made with primarily sugar, or is it a chewy snack? Will you be able to rinse or brush your teeth following the snack? How many times during the day have you eaten or given your children sugary snacks? Eating the right foods can help protect you from tooth decay and other diseases. Healthy snacks are not just good for your body—they are good for your teeth.

Sources: www.cdc.gov
www.nidcr.nih.gov
www.ada.org

For more oral health information, please visit our website at www.deltadentalne.org.

DDNE AGAIN RECEIVES HIGH MARKS FROM A.M. BEST

Delta Dental of Nebraska consistently earns high financial ratings and, in fact, as part of the Delta Dental of Minnesota Group, is one of the most highly-rated dental plans in the country.

Recently, A.M. Best Co., the world's oldest insurance rating and information source, gave DDNE an A (Excellent) rating for the ninth consecutive year.

BROAD NETWORK ACCESS FOR ALL GROUPS

As part of our mission to provide access to affordable dental care, Delta Dental of Nebraska offers members access to the largest network in the nation. All groups have access to the approximately 124,000 dentists participating in the Delta Dental Premier® nationwide network.

Members may use this network inside and outside of Nebraska. In Nebraska, we have 687 participating dentists.



EmployerUpdate is published for our group clients. Article ideas and questions from readers are welcome.
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