Colonial Voluntary Benefits



Dental insurance: A bright idea for your business



Many challenges, one solution

Your business faces a variety of challenges every day. Fortunately, you can solve many of them through one solution: offering a strong benefits package that includes dental insurance.

61% of employees view dental benefits as important, ranking second after medical when insurance benefits are considered.[1]

By making dental insurance part of a comprehensive health and wellness plan, you can:

- Look out for your employees' overall health and wellness
- Attract and retain top talent
- Improve productivity and reduce employee absenteeism
- Help protect employees and their families from the unexpected

Throughout this eBook, we'll take a closer look at how dental insurance is a vital part of a comprehensive benefits package. We'll also explain how you can offer dental coverage without impacting your budget.

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A foundation for overall health and wellness

A productive business needs a healthy workforce, and dental health has a major impact on overall health and wellness.

Most of us are taught from an early age that having good dental hygiene can help prevent bad breath, cavities and toothaches. However, recent research shows that oral health is also connected to certain diseases:[2]

- Heart disease and stroke may be tied to inflammation and infections that oral bacteria can cause.
- Osteoporosis, which causes bones to weaken, may be connected to periodontal bone loss and tooth loss.
- It's more difficult for people with gum disease to control their blood sugar levels, and regular periodontal care can improve diabetes control.
- Endocarditis, an infection of the heart's inner lining, usually occurs when bacteria or germs from another part of the body (such as the mouth) travel through the bloodstream.



Other conditions that may be connected to oral health include:[2]

- Eating disorders
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Head and neck cancers

Simply put, the mouth, teeth and gums play a pivotal role in how the rest of the body functions. The good news is routine dental appointments can help.

Regular dental exams can reveal signs of certain diseases.[2] And when dentists detect oral health problems early, treatment is likely simpler and more affordable.[3]

Without dental coverage, employees may put off scheduling regular dental appointments, or lack the financial resources to do so. More than 30% of employees who are not offered dental insurance by their employer have gone longer than a year since seeing the dentist (twice the percentage of those with dental insurance). And 19% of employees without employer-offered dental insurance have gone longer than three years (more than twice that of those with dental insurance).[4]



By offering your employees reliable dental coverage, you can encourage them to be proactive in protecting their overall health.



Retain top talent

The benefits package you offer plays a vital role in attracting and retaining employees in today's competitive job market.

As health care plans have changed, employees are seeking additional benefit options to help close the gaps in their medical coverage. And employees rank dental as one of the most desirable benefits. This is true no matter what stage of life they're in or what their personal circumstances are.

A valued benefit for a diverse workforce[4]

WHEN CONSIDERING A NEW JOB

89% of employees between 18 and 49 say dental insurance is important.

77% of employees 50 and older say dental insurance is important.

81% OF MALES

87% OF FEMALES

say dental insurance is important.

84% of employees who are married or living with a partner say dental insurance is important.

88% of single, never married employees say dental insurance is important.

But offering dental coverage is about much more than attracting new employees. Dental insurance can be a big reason your current employees remain at their jobs — or leave for new opportunities.

According to research conducted for Colonial Life, 46% of employees 25 and older want more or better benefits — and are willing to change employers to get them.[5] When asked specifically about dental insurance, just over half of employees say it's important when considering a new job.[4] Employees feel even stronger about this when their current employers don't offer dental insurance.



In fact, 75% of employees who are not offered dental insurance by their employer say it's important in considering another job.[4]

Many employees who are willing to go elsewhere for dental insurance likely won't have a hard time finding another employer who offers it. Currently, 58% of employers offer dental coverage.[6]

Employees want and need flexible, competitive dental insurance that provides protection for their specific needs. Not offering this benefit can be a deal breaker for those considering a future with your business.



Good for your business

Without routine dental check-ups, employees run the risk of having unexpected health problems in the future.

When employees experience these health issues, they often end up being distracted on the job or spending time away from the workplace altogether.



Adults with poor oral health were more likely to lose one hour or more in unplanned dental visits than those who reported very good oral health.[7]

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), an average of 320.8 million work or school hours are lost annually for dental care in the United States, with 92.4 million hours lost for emergency (unplanned) care. For every 1,000 adults, 986 hours are lost annually for unplanned dental care.[7]

The CDC suggests the lack of regular preventive dental care may delay the diagnosis of oral health problems, which causes employees to lose time in seeking unplanned care.

When you add up the lost hours associated with dental health issues, the effects on your business — and the overall economy — can be staggering. Unexpected time out of the office can have a major effect on your employees' productivity and your bottom line.

And while not all employees with dental health issues miss work, many of them can have trouble focusing — especially when dealing with pain or stress caused by health problems.

Your employees may also have to help with their family's dental emergencies.



Among children and adults, the effects of oral disease may include missed school days, learning challenges, social stigma, or impaired nutrition and health.[7]

Simple steps can help prevent your business from feeling the financial pain of low productivity and high absenteeism. The best way to keep your employees happy, healthy and focused is to encourage them to get the dental care they need.



Protect employees from the unexpected

Medical insurance is a great way to look out for your employees' well-being, but it doesn't cover everything.

Most health plans don't include dental coverage, which can leave employees with out-of-pocket expenses after each trip to the dentist.



One in four U.S. workers say they and their spouse have less than $1,000 in savings.[8]

That's where dental insurance can make a big difference. Like any other insurance coverage you offer your employees, dental insurance can help them prepare for the costs associated with their care.

Dental bills can quickly add up. Even if some employees can build routine dental appointments into their budget, advanced dental procedures like fillings and root canals can cause serious financial difficulties — especially since they're often unexpected and more expensive.

Some of your employees and their family members may also need braces, which can lead to costly orthodontist bills for years. Many dental insurance plans offer optional orthodontia riders that employees can purchase to provide additional financial protection.

Without the financial safety net dental insurance provides, many employees fail to get the care they need. According to a recent study, 59% of adults indicated that they forgo dental care due to cost.[9]

A University of Michigan study reveals that one in four older adults wait until they have a problem to see the dentist, chiefly due to cost and a lack of dental insurance.[10]



Dental insurance is important for employees who have an annual household income below $50,000.

80% of these employees say dental insurance is important when choosing a job.[4]

Dental insurance can help your employees during times of financial uncertainty, and it's another way you can show you care about their well-being.



Solutions for offering cost-effective coverage

A simple way to provide dental insurance

You recognize how important dental insurance is for your employees, but perhaps you worry about the costs or challenges associated with adding it to your current plan. Thankfully, there's a simple and cost-effective solution: you can offer dental insurance as a voluntary benefit.

Better business through voluntary benefits

Voluntary benefits, also called supplemental insurance, enhance the health insurance you may already offer. Paid directly to the employee, voluntary benefits can be used to help with things other insurance may not cover, such as:



LOST WAGES

DEDUCTIBLES AND CO-PAYS

HOUSEHOLD BILLS

Best of all, voluntary benefits can be employee-paid, so you can offer them without impacting your budget.

Choosing a benefits provider

When implementing a health and wellness plan that includes dental insurance and other voluntary benefits, you need a partner you can trust.

Here are tips for finding the benefits provider who's right for you:

- **Look for expertise**
  When evaluating a provider, make sure they have experience offering comprehensive voluntary benefit packages and people who can help you understand your options.
- **Make education a priority**
  Every employee's needs are different. Offering 1-to-1 counseling — in person, by phone and virtually — allows your employees to make informed decisions.
- **Look for technology supported by people**
  The right provider not only offers seamless technology solutions for enrollment and benefit administrators, but also has people available to support you.
- **Ask about their communication capabilities**
  A strong benefits partner should be able to offer customized communications with consistent messaging to all your employees.

Selecting the right dental coverage

Here are some key features to consider when selecting dental insurance:

- **Freedom to choose any dentist**
  The ability to select any dentist provides employees with flexibility and makes it simple to make routine appointments.
- **Preventive and major services**
  In addition to offering coverage for preventive services, employees also need financial protection for major procedures as they're typically more expensive.
- **Multiple plans**
  Dental insurance that offers different plan levels can help you meet a variety of employee needs.
- **Family coverage**
  Coverage for their families will keep your employees smiling.
- **Additional coverage**
  Optional vision and orthodontic coverage is another way to help employees and their families get the protections that are right for them.

With the right benefits provider and solutions in place, you can solve some of your top business challenges and keep your employees smiling.

1 LIMRA, Unpublished LIMRA Employee Data, 2018.
2 Mayo Clinic, Oral Health: A Window to Your Overall Health, 2019.
3 American Dental Association, Questions About Going to the Dentist, 2020.
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5 Research conducted for Colonial Life & Accident Insurance Company by Luntz Global among 500 nationwide small business owners, October 2017.
6 LIMRA, Understanding Current Trends in Employee Benefits: Benefit Penetration Rates, 2017.
7 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Preventing Chronic Disease, 2018.
8 EBRI, The 2017 Retirement Confidence Survey, 2017.
9 ADA, Oral Health and Well-Being in the United States, 2020.
10 University of Michigan, National Poll on Healthy Aging, 2017. Survey of adults ages 50-64.

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