



Tooth Talk

Is Your Dental Insurance Working for You?

This year, a number of important union contracts are up for negotiations, including the BC Government Employees Union, CUPE, the Registered Nurses Union and the Telecommunications Workers Union (Telus). In negotiating concessions, additional limits on preventive care are on the table, including the possibility of 12-month limits for typical recall (checkup and cleaning) services.

Dental insurance companies have already changed the limit for a checkup and cleaning from 6 months to 9 months. Now they are looking to change it to 12 months.
One time per year! Why?

Ironically, it is preventive care, including regular recall exams, which has been critical to the province's success in reducing dental disease. Unlike other medical conditions, like the cold or flu, dental disease does not resolve itself, and can lead to pain, infection and, without intervention, tooth loss. The frequency of your recall visits can only be determined by a dentist, though many patients

allow their dental coverage to determine their dental care.

Unfortunately, the public perception exists that the war on dental disease has been won with the decline in decay and tooth loss. However, this is only a partial victory given the prevalence of periodontal disease. The 1996 Adult Dental Health Survey reported that 40% of patients over the age of 16 had healthy gingivae or reversible periodontal problems, leaving three of five adults with serious periodontal problems. Looking forward, the need for ongoing professional care will become all the more important as increasing medical evidence points to the relationship between dental and medical health.

It is interesting to note that the "6 month checkup" was not established by the dental profession. It was arbitrarily determined by a toothpaste company – Ipana toothpaste. "Bucky Beaver says . . ." circa 1954

What is also well recognized in both Canadian and US studies, is the strong relationship between dental health and insurance coverage. By reducing costs to treatment, patients have greater access to dental care, especially preventive care. As observed in our Adult Dental Health Survey, insured patients, on average, receive more preventive services and fewer extensive treatments – such as restorations – than non-insured services. As a result, many patients are enjoying dental health well beyond that of their parents. Employers, unions and other purchasing groups are to be commended for their foresight in the initial development of these plans.

"We have spent years educating our patients about the value of preventing dental disease through regular recall examinations (now possibly in jeopardy), cleanings, and oral hygiene instruction, all of which have undoubtedly contributed to the best level of oral health ever enjoyed by the public. In fact, our resolute approach as it pertains to prevention is one of the leading reasons the dental profession is so highly respected by members of the public. Furthermore, the observation we frequently hear about how dentistry's zeal for preventive care is working to mitigate our need to exist, is likely coming to fruition. . . . Interestingly, a prominent US dental insurance provider, has estimated that a dollar spent on preventive services saves \$4 in other treatment."

Please, remember, as a patient you visit the dentist for checkups not the insurance company. It is the dentists, not the dental plans that are in the best position to advise on patients' oral health, including their frequency of treatments.

- Dr. Richard Busse, past President of the Association of Dental Surgeons of BC.

Adapted from the Association of Dental Surgeons of BC newsletter "Connections" – March 2001

The greatest compliment you could give us is your referral !!

In Related News . . . Increase in Tooth Decay is Evidenced in Kelowna

Public health in the Central Okanagan region estimates that the number of cavity-free kindergarten children without decay has fallen 5% since fluoride was removed from the municipal water system four years ago. In 1995, 72% of this group had no cavities or signs of dental disease. In the fall of 2000, this number fell to 67% following the removal of fluoride from the city's water supply in 1996. It seems apparent that the efforts of the dental profession and community fluoridation services have been so effective at reducing decay, that a generation of young parents and youths are living unaware of the benefits of fluoridation and unaware of the negative effects of decay. They've never experienced it. If you have any questions regarding this alarming trend of decay or questions about fluoride, please contact our office. We will be glad to help you understand more about either topic.

ADSBC's "Connections" – March 2001

Get a Whiter Brighter Smile . . . and Help Prevent Heart Disease and Stroke

They say everyone knows someone who has been affected directly or indirectly by heart disease or stroke. It is estimated that 1 in every 2.7 Canadians die from heart disease or stroke. This number is alarming. Heart disease and stroke are hitting closer to home for all of us. Six years ago I lost my father to a stroke.

Unless the prevention of stroke is improved, the number of strokes across Canada is expected to increase over the next two decades. The aging of the "Baby Boom" generation is one of the major factors pushing up the number of strokes. Stroke is the fourth leading cause of death in Canada. Each year, about 16,000 Canadians die from stroke. Each year, more women than men die from stroke. There are between 40,000 to 50,000 strokes in Canada each year. After age 55, the risk of stroke doubles every 10 years.

What is a stroke? A stroke is a sudden loss of brain function caused by the interruption of the flow of blood to the brain from a blockage or from the rupture of blood vessels in the brain. As the brain controls everything we say, do and think, a stroke can have a wide variety of effects. Effects can include altered movement and coordination; altered feeling, sight, memory, comprehension, and ability to reason and problem-solve. As well, communication (speech, reading and writing), personality and emotional behaviour can be altered. Strokes can be devastating.

Today, hearts and February mean more to me than just Valentine's day. February is Heart and Stroke month. The Heart and Stroke Foundation is the single largest non-commercial source of funds for heart disease and stroke research in Canada. It needs the support of donors to continue funding life-saving research, health education and new paths of prevention. They have made great strides. Research and health education initiatives funded by the Heart and Stroke Foundation have contributed to a 25% decrease in the rate of death due to heart disease and stroke in the past 10 years. *But there's still a long way to go.*

We would like to invite you to join us in the fight against heart disease and strokes. For the remainder of February and all of March, we will be donating to the Heart and Stroke Foundation, on our patients' behalf, one half of the proceeds collected from those patients who are whitening their teeth with our "at-home whitening" kits. The cost for this treatment is \$175 for a single arch kit and \$350 for a kit to do both arches. We ask that you only pay us one half the fee and provide us with a cheque for the remaining half payable to the Heart and Stroke Foundation. We will forward the cheque for you and a personal tax receipt will be issued to you by the Foundation.

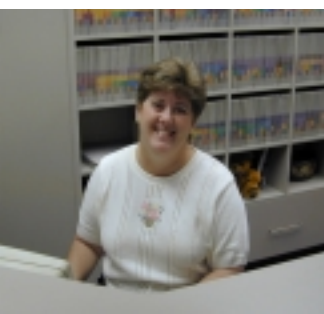
Don't wait until it gets too close to you. Help us do something today.

Thank you for helping us make a difference.

- Dr. Buschel and Staff

There is a New Face in the Crowd

We are excited to welcome and introduce to you the newest member of our team. **Cathy Curry**. Cathy will now be the first voice you hear when you call our office and the first face you



see when you visit us. Cathy is our new "patient relationship specialist." She is the pleasant personality who meets and greets at our front desk and on the phones. Cathy has recently joined our team from Vancouver where she left the hustle and bustle

of a career specializing in health care software to join us in the "Good Life" here in Kelowna. She welcomes the change of pace and plans to take full advantage of her relaxation time and surroundings to pursue her interests in tennis, golf and her passion of sewing and other fabric arts. Cathy's artistic prowess puts Martha Stewart to shame! Cathy is excited to meet everyone and help you with any of your appointment needs or questions.

For the Office of Dr. Darren Buschel

Office Hours

Tuesday 8:30am – 5:30pm
Wednesday 8:30am – 5:30pm
Thursday 10:00am – 7:00pm
Friday 8:30am – 5:30pm

(weekends and evening appts available)

Location

Springfield Dental Centre
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