



Oral Health Care Measures

Preventive Dental Care Study

Delta Dental is dedicated to advancing oral health for all Americans, which includes sharing knowledge and meaningful insights on national oral health trends. As the nation's largest dental benefits provider, Delta Dental has one of the largest data sets of aggregated national claims data on oral care.

Each year, Delta Dental analyzes the preventive dental care services used by Delta Dental members across the country (in an anonymized aggregate form) and prepares an annual preventive dental care study that identifies gaps in care that can help target potential oral health interventions as well as identify areas for further research. Specifically, this data helps identify trends in preventive treatment delivery for commercially insured people and identifies the percentage of those at the highest risk of developing oral disease who are receiving the care they need.

Key findings

Preventive treatment tends to decline as school-aged children get older, with more children at age 12 obtaining preventive care than those at age 15. Data continues to show most children ages 1-18 who are at risk for dental decay are not receiving recommended fluoride and sealant treatments.

Child prevention: sealants

Despite sealants being covered by their Delta Dental plan, children at risk for caries are not getting the recommended preventive care.



About **5 in 10** at-risk children **did not** get a sealant placed on at least one permanent first molar by age 10.



73% of 15-year-old members at risk **had not** received a sealant on at least one permanent second molar.

Child prevention: fluoride treatment

Despite fluoride applications being covered by their Delta Dental plan, children at higher risk for dental caries are not getting the recommended care.



65% of at-risk children (ages 1-18) **did not** get the recommended two fluoride treatments.

Many children do not see the dentist for the first time before age 3, even though it is recommended to start preventive dental check-ups by age 1.

Child prevention: oral health service utilization

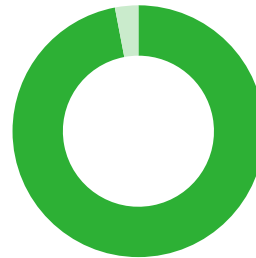
Though recommended, many children are not seeing the dentist before age 3.



Only **27%** of children under age 3 visited a dentist in 2022. Conversely, **73% of children age 3-18** visited a dentist in 2022.

Child prevention: risk of dental caries

There are gaps in care that could help target research more effectively. Most dentists are not reporting caries risk documentation.

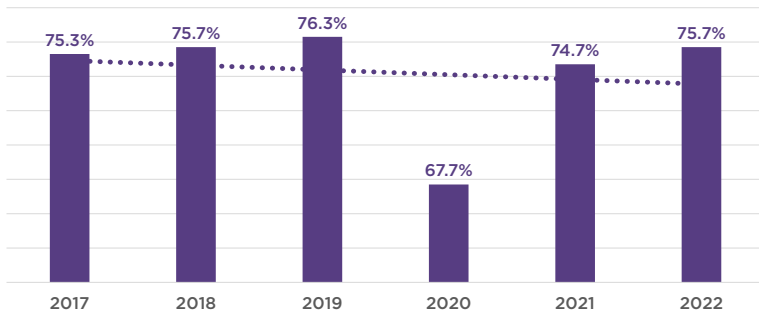


97% of children ages 0-20 **did not** have caries risk documentation reported on a claim.

The study noted three positive observations:

The percentage of adults aged 30+ who are at higher risk for **tooth decay is slowly, but steadily declining.**

Adult prevention: risk of dental caries



■ 76% of adults at-risk for caries **did** have at least one evaluation.

Most adults who are at risk for periodontal disease are **receiving regular cleanings.**

Adult prevention: periodontal disease prevention

Approximately **5 in 10** at-risk adults **did** have two or more cleanings.



Delta Dental recommended preventive dental care services

- Children should see the dentist by their first birthday
- Children ages 1-19 should get two fluoride treatments per year
- Children ages 6-14 should have sealants applied during the cavity prone years.
- Adults at high risk for periodontal disease should have at least two cleanings per year

Conclusion

Preventive care is an essential part of optimal overall health. More specifically, preventive dental care can play an instrumental role in decreasing the occurrence of serious oral disease, improving other health problems, reducing disparities, and lowering health care costs.

The data included in this study identifies gaps in care that can more effectively target both intervention and research, including:

- Addressing the challenges for patients of all ages to receive the recommended preventive dental care, especially with older teens (age 15+) and younger children (under age 3)
- Increasing the percentage of dentists documenting caries risk for children
- Breaking down barriers for adults to receive preventive oral health care, especially in certain high-risk populations

As the nation's oral health leader, Delta Dental will continue to address the gaps in care and work with partners across the health care ecosystem to innovate on improving access to preventive dental care.

Methodology

Data: De-identified, aggregate Delta Dental commercial plan data (excluding Medicaid/Medicare Advantage plans) representative of all 50 states, DC, and Puerto Rico from 2017 - 2022 (Some measures have changed slightly over the years, so trending data may not be available and those measures are noted in the study).

Key measures tracked:

Child prevention: fluoride treatment

- Percentage at risk for caries; at-risk w/ 2+ fluoride treatments (age 1-18)
- No risk: Percentage w/ 2+ fluoride treatments (age 1-20)

Children prevention: sealants

- On First Molars (by age 10): Percentage w/ 1+ sealant; with all 4 molars sealed
- On Second Molars (by age 15): Percentage w/ 1+ sealant; with 1/ all 4 molars sealed

Periodontal disease prevention (Age 30+)

- Percentage w/ past periodontal treatment; with past periodontal treatment + 2+ dental cleanings

Adult prevention (age 19+)

- Percentage at high risk for dental caries; high-risk w/ 1+ evaluations

Child utilization of services

- Age ≤ 3
 - Percentage w/ any dental service
 - Established dental home with 1+ evaluations; with D0145 evaluation (oral evaluation for a patient under three years of age and counseling with primary caregiver)
- Age 3-18
 - Percentage w/ any dental service
 - Established dental home with 1+ evaluations
- Caries risk documentation (Ages 0-20)
 - Percentage w/ CDT (Current Dental Terminology) documentation of caries risk

Limitations: Data includes only Delta Dental commercial claims and is not necessarily representative of all commercial dental insurance plans.