Delta Dental’s Brush Biopsy Benefit

Delta Dental of New Jersey covers a procedure that general dentists can use with their patients for the prevention and early detection of oral cancer.

Called a “brush biopsy,” the procedure uses newly developed technology to identify and analyze cancerous and precancerous cells. Using a brush biopsy, dentists can identify and treat abnormal cells that could become cancerous, or detect the disease in its earliest stages. The simple procedure can be done during the course of a regular exam, and involves little or no patient discomfort. Positive results from the brush biopsy must be confirmed by the traditional scalpel biopsy.

The brush biopsy procedure has been endorsed by the American Dental Association.
Who’s At Risk?

Everyone. In about 10 percent of patients, a dental professional may notice a red or white spot inside a patient’s mouth during a routine dental examination. Most often, the spot is harmless, but it could also indicate a serious problem like oral cancer. If the dentist decides that the tissue should be tested, a brush biopsy can be performed in the dental office using a patented kit developed by a company named Oral CDx. The dentist then sends the sample to Oral CDx for analysis.

Delta Dental will pay the approved percentage for the procedure fee for covered patients. As with other oral biopsies, your medical carrier will generally cover the cost of laboratory analysis.

Oral Cancer: A Deadly Foe

- Approximately 8,000 people die from cancer in the oral cavity and pharynx in the U.S. each year.
- Over 40,000 new cases are diagnosed annually.
- Five-year survival rate was only 61.5 percent for the years 2002–2008.
- Advanced-stage treatment can cost as much as $96,000 per patient.
- Early detection of oral cancer would improve the survival rate to 80 percent or more, and reduce treatment costs significantly.

Oral cancer is more common among smokers than nonsmokers, and more prevalent among blacks than whites. Other risk factors include use of smokeless tobacco and excessive consumption of alcohol. However, 7 percent of cases have no risk factors at all, and the incidence of the disease is on the rise among women and in persons under 40.

Find Out More


One in 93 men and women will be diagnosed with oral cancer over their lifetime. Delta Dental views brush biopsies as a major breakthrough in the effort to stop the tragedy of oral cancer. We believe it will dramatically assist in the early detection of oral cancer and help keep employees healthy, happy, and on the job.