

Can I get dental care if I'm on Medicare?



Brenda Lyle Sep 23, 2021 Updated 12 hrs ago



The short answer? Medicare doesn't cover routine dental care. Some retirees have the means to afford dental procedures, while low-income seniors may end up sacrificing dental care altogether. Unfortunately, this is a stage of life when people need it most.

Aging affects our entire body, including our teeth. Gums recede, creating opportunity for decay and tooth loss. Medications can cause "dry mouth," changing the PH and creating ideal conditions for tooth erosion, decay and infection. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, one in five Americans over 65 have untreated cavities. Two of three seniors have gum disease, with bacteria linked to heart problems! When teeth are in bad shape, people adjust how and what they eat, inviting nutrition-related diseases like diabetes and hypertension.

Luckily, you can get dental coverage as a Medicare recipient if you enroll in a Medicare Advantage Plan. Another option is dental insurance, which runs between \$20-\$100/month. Some seniors may need extensive dental work, while others might just need regular checkups and cleanings. The right policy matters.

Other options

Negotiate with your dentist. Private rates are often negotiable or include payment plans.

Dental Savings Plan. These (non-policies) charge a yearly membership fee and offer reduced fees by participating dentists.

Cleaning Without Exam. Florida allows for "direct access" to dental hygienists for a cleaning, without an exam. See if your primary dentist will go along.

Coupons or Deals. Many dentists offer new patient "specials" for cleanings and x-rays.

Free or Sliding Scale Providers. These do exist! Call your local health department to find one.

Dental Schools. These charge very low rates and sometimes provide free services. Professors oversee all dental work by students.

Prevention is the best way to reduce your dental costs. Good nutrition, healthy dental habits and regular check-ups will keep your smile, heart and wallet happy! Need help?

OneSeniorPlace.com can connect you to resources for insurance or low cost dental work.

One Senior Place is a marketplace for resources and provider of information, advice, care and on-site services for seniors and their families. Questions for this column are answered by professionals in nursing, social work, care management and in-home care. Send questions to askOSP@OneSeniorPlace.com or visit One Senior Place, The Experts in Aging at OneSeniorPlace.com. Brenda Lyle is a Certified Care Manager and Certified Dementia Practitioner for One Senior Place, Greater Orlando.



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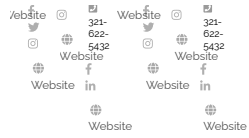
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