

Posterior Composites and Implant Therapy:

Improved coverage to fit your needs.

Brushing up on the latest dental advances.

At Delta Dental of Illinois, we closely monitor advances in dental science and technology, and frequently review market trends and the feedback of our valued customers like you, so that we can continue to offer the best dental benefit coverage. After careful consideration, Delta Dental of Illinois is pleased to announce two new significant enhancements to our dental benefit programs — coverage of implant therapy and posterior composites (tooth-colored fillings on back teeth).

Posterior Composites

Because of the cosmetic benefits, tooth-colored fillings (composites) have become a popular alternative to silver-colored fillings (amalgams).

Many enrollees want the cosmetic benefit of composites because they are tooth-colored and blend in with natural teeth. A recent report from the National Association of Dental Plans showed that fewer dentists are doing amalgams.

While most dental plans provide coverage for composite fillings on teeth in the front of the mouth only, Delta Dental of Illinois' standard benefit offering now includes tooth-colored fillings on back teeth as well.

Amalgam fillings will still be covered. The benefit of posterior composites is primarily cosmetic, so it is not necessary to replace current amalgam fillings with composite fillings. The American Dental Association has consistently maintained that amalgams are durable and safe.

Posterior composites will be included at the level dictated by your group's specific plan design.

Implant Therapy

Advances in materials, training and technology have made implants a viable option to replace missing teeth — and often a better option over traditional methods.

Implants are surgically placed below the jaw, look and feel like natural teeth and have a success rate of 98 percent over 10 years.

Traditional tooth replacement methods like fixed bridges or partial dentures often require repairs and adjustments over time. Implants are generally low maintenance, which means they typically have a lower cost over their lifetime than traditional methods.

Implants will be included at the level dictated by your specific plan design. Implant payments will apply to your annual maximum, and often will exceed the annual maximum.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Amalgams (silver-colored fillings) vs. Composites (tooth-colored fillings)

Does Delta Dental cover posterior composites (tooth-colored fillings on back teeth)?

Yes (for Delta Dental PPO and Delta Dental Premier programs). Delta Dental of Illinois also covers composites on anterior (front) teeth.

Why is Delta Dental of Illinois adding coverage of posterior composites as a standard benefit offering?

Many enrollees want the cosmetic benefit of posterior composites over amalgams because they are tooth-colored and blend in with natural teeth. Additionally, a recent report from the National Association of Dental Plans showed that fewer dentists are doing amalgams (silver-colored fillings). As a result of enrollee feedback and dental industry data, Delta Dental of Illinois decided to make posterior composite coverage a standard benefit in all of our dental benefit plans.

Are amalgam fillings still covered?

Yes.

What fillings are standard? If the use of amalgam is declining, why is it still considered standard?

The ADA states that there are a variety of dental filling materials that would be appropriate for a dentist to use, depending on the situation with a particular patient. The treating dentist is free to exercise his or her professional judgment and choose the most appropriate filling material for each unique situation.

A July 2008 report from the National Association of Dental Plans confirmed that the use of amalgam for restorations is declining, and that there has been a significant increase in the use of composites on the posterior teeth over the last several years.

The ADA has published information that attributes the declining use of amalgam to a variety of factors, including

better access to dental care, fluoridated water, better oral hygiene practices and increasing use of sealants.

Even though more patients and dentists are choosing to use tooth-colored filling materials, the ADA still supports the use of dental amalgam as a safe, affordable and durable material. In its *Statement on Dental Amalgam*, the ADA notes that dental amalgam has been studied and reviewed extensively, and that it has established a record of safety and effectiveness. The ADA continues to believe that amalgam is a valuable, viable and safe choice for dental patients and concurs with the findings of the U.S. Public Health Service that amalgam has “continuing value in maintaining oral health.”

Are there any adverse health effects from using amalgam?

While questions have been raised concerning the safety of amalgam fillings, no public agency has found evidence to support discontinuation of the material and the FDA places no restrictions on their use. *From the American Dental Association:* The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and other public health organizations have investigated the safety of dental amalgams and concluded that “no valid scientific evidence has shown that amalgams cause harm to patients with dental restorations, except in rare cases of allergy.” The World Health Organization (WHO) reached a similar conclusion, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) maintains that “at present, there is scant evidence that the health of the vast majority of people with amalgam is compromised, nor that removing amalgam fillings has a beneficial effect on health.”

Can I replace my old amalgam fillings with composite fillings?

The Food and Drug Administration does not recommend patients have amalgam fillings removed since this could cause harm to the tooth structure and pose other health risks to the patient.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Implant Therapy

What is a dental implant?

A dental implant is a small device that is used to replace a missing tooth. Implants are surgically placed in the upper or lower jaw, where it will fuse to the jawbone in three to six months. A crown is then attached to a post, also known as an abutment, that extends from the implant above the gum line. The finished implant looks and feels like a natural tooth.

Why did Delta Dental of Illinois add implant coverage as a standard benefit offering?

We've been closely monitoring advances in implant materials, training and technology and have found that implants are a viable option to replace missing teeth. Advances in dentistry have improved the implant success rate to 98 percent over 10 years, often making it a better option for replacing a single missing tooth in a healthy patient than a bridge. While the fee for a single implant is higher than the fee for a three-unit bridge, implants generally have a lower cost over their lifetime than bridges, which can require repairs and replacements.

What are the advantages of implants over other tooth replacement options?

Implants preserve natural teeth better than fixed bridges or partial dentures because they do not rely on adjacent teeth for support — and they look and feel like natural teeth. Implants have a success rate of 98 percent over 10 years.

Do implants work for everyone?

Candidates for dental implants need to have good general and oral health, healthy gums (i.e., no periodontal disease) and adequate bone to support the implant. A thorough evaluation by a dentist will help determine whether an enrollee is a good candidate for dental implants.

Can implants fail?

The percentage of failed implants is very low, but they can fail for the same reasons that cause the loss of natural teeth: poor oral hygiene, periodontal disease, grinding and smoking. Some systemic problems, such as diabetes, can also affect the success of implants. A thorough evaluation by a dentist will help determine whether an enrollee is a good candidate for dental implants.

How long does treatment take?

Treatment time from placement of the implant to final restoration can range from three to 12 months. The time frame varies according to each individual enrollee's rate of healing.

Are implants a specialty procedure?

No. Any licensed dentist can perform the entire procedure. However, a general dentist may refer implant patients to a specialist (usually an oral surgeon or a periodontist) for the implant surgery, and the general dentist will then place the final crown or other restoration.