

# Oral Brush Biopsy

An important weapon in the fight against oral cancer



# Delta Dental provides an innovative benefit to fight oral cancer

**D**elta Dental of Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, and Tennessee provide an innovative benefit that can prevent and detect one of the most serious illnesses—oral cancer.

We cover the BrushTest<sup>®</sup>, an oral brush biopsy. This important tool in the fight against oral cancer uses advanced technology to identify and analyze precancerous and cancerous cells.

The BrushTest represents a breakthrough in the fight against oral cancer. Using this diagnostic procedure, dentists can identify and treat abnormal cells that could

become cancerous, or they can detect the disease in its earliest and most treatable stage. The test is quick, accurate, and involves little or no patient discomfort.

#### **Oral cancer is costly...and deadly**

Because oral health and overall health are so closely linked, BrushTest coverage can save your organization more than dental claim costs. **The potential savings in medical costs could be substantial.** This is because oral cancer is one of the most expensive cancers to treat as the average cost for treating an advanced case is \$200,000.



Oral health is a critical part of overall health. More than 120 diseases have symptoms that can be identified through an oral exam. By providing a quality Delta Dental plan, your organization can save significant health care costs, especially when diseases are detected before they become expensive to treat or even life threatening.

It's important to know:

- Each year, oral cancer claims as many lives as skin cancer and more than cervical cancer.
- Risk factors for oral cancer include smoking, chewing tobacco, and drinking alcohol. However, a full 25 percent of cases have no risk factors at all.
- Oral cancer is rising in women, those under age 40, and nonsmokers.
- About 30,000 Americans are diagnosed with oral cancer each year.
- About 8,000 Americans die from oral cancer every year.
- Many who survive are severely disfigured and suffer a compromised life.

Just as alarming, the five-year survival rate for oral cancer hasn't improved in the last 40 years. It remains a dismal 57 percent in part because oral cancer is difficult to detect, even in its earliest stages. However, if it is found early, the survival rate increases dramatically to 81 percent. **And if it is found and treated at the precancerous stage, it can be prevented.**

**About the procedure and benefit**

Since many people visit their dentists more often than their primary care physicians, dental professionals are in a unique position to detect oral cancer because they routinely perform thorough examinations of the mouth. Dentists may see red or white spots in the mouths of about 10 percent of their patients. Although most of these spots are harmless, some are not. If a dentist determines that the tissue needs to be tested, a BrushTest can be performed in the dental office using a kit developed by a company called CDx Laboratories. The dentist then sends the sample to CDx Laboratories for computer-assisted analysis.

The OralCDx software was adapted from a program designed for the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), or "Star Wars" system. With this technology, CDx Laboratories can spot a precancerous or cancerous cell even if it is partially obscured by other cells, much like the SDI system was intended to distinguish decoys from real missiles. Pathologists use this technology in conjunction with a microscopic evaluation before giving a full report to the dentist.

Delta Dental pays the approved percentage of the fee for both the BrushTest procedure and the laboratory analysis for covered patients.

Because of Delta Dental's commitment to helping prevent oral cancer, we are making educational materials available to you and your employees on our Web sites. Please see the back page for our Web addresses.



**Our mission is to improve and promote oral health**

At Delta Dental, we dedicate ourselves every day to improving the health of our enrollees. We do this by vigorously promoting the importance of oral health as an essential part of overall health.

We believe the use of the BrushTest will improve overall health by dramatically reducing the incidence of oral cancer. Detecting the early signs of skin, cervical, prostate, colon, and breast cancers has saved countless lives each year. The breakthrough technology developed by CDx Laboratories will do the same for oral cancer.

By including the BrushTest in our benefits offerings, we are strengthening our commitment to you and to keeping your employees healthy, happy, and on the job.

