



Medicare Dental Coverage Act of 2021

The Medicare Dental Coverage Act of 2021 amends title XVIII of the Social Security Act to add a dental benefit to Medicare Part B, which since 1965 has excluded coverage for most dental services such as preventive dental care, routine dental treatments, and dentures. This gap in Medicare coverage leaves nearly 37 million beneficiaries¹ at risk for preventable oral health issues, which can result in unnecessary emergency room visits, longer term health issues, and higher Medicare spending. Leaving this category of Americans without adequate oral health care, can also have a serious impact on the overall health of our nation in the long term: Oral conditions such as cavities, severe gum disease, and severe tooth loss have been known to exacerbate chronic conditions like diabetes and cardiovascular disease, and have been linked to increased mortality for those with chronic kidney disease.

According to a recent AARP survey, eight in 10 adults over 45 believe regular dental visits are just as important as physician exams.² But about half of older adults that reported skipping dental exams cited cost as the reason.³ In 2016, a fifth of Medicare beneficiaries who used dental services spent more than \$1,000 out-of-pocket.⁴

The Medicare Dental Coverage Act of 2021 would:

- Reimburse dentists and other licensed oral health professionals for preventive and screening services such as oral exams, dental cleanings, dental x-rays, and fluoride treatments.
- Cover basic and major dental treatments as defined by the Secretary of Health and Human Services. Medicare beneficiaries would be eligible to receive two oral exams and two dental cleanings each year.
- Cover a full or partial set of dentures once every five years, or more frequently in cases where a dentist or qualified oral health professional determines the dentures do not fit the individual.

Payment to providers will be made under the Physician Fee Schedule with beneficiaries responsible for 20 percent of cost-sharing for preventive and screening services as well as basic services. Cost sharing for major services will be phased in over time, reaching 50 percent in 2029.

¹ [Drilling Down on Dental Coverage and Costs for Medicare Beneficiaries | KFF](#)

² <https://www.aarp.org/research/topics/health/info-2019/older-adults-views-dental-health.html>

³ <https://www.aarp.org/research/topics/health/info-2019/older-adults-views-dental-health.html>

⁴ <https://www.kff.org/medicare/issue-brief/drilling-down-on-dental-coverage-and-costs-for-medicare-beneficiaries/>