

# WDS ENROLLEE NEWSLETTER 2005

## WESTERN DENTAL NEWS

### New Offices Opening in 2005

Western Dental is committed to making dental services available throughout California and Arizona. During 2005, Western Dental is opening new offices to meet the needs of its California enrollees in the cities of Tulare, Bakersfield, Manteca, El Centro, and Murrieta. In Arizona new offices are opening in Chandler, Phoenix and Tucson. Each office will provide general dentistry as well as orthodontic services to those cities and the surrounding communities. Information regarding the openings is available on the Western Dental website [www.westerndental.com](http://www.westerndental.com). Watch for even more new offices that are planned to open in 2006!

### WDS Has an A. M. Best Rating of A-

M. Best Co. has assigned a financial strength rating (FSR) of A- (Excellent) to Western Dental Services, Inc., (WDS). The rating outlook has been listed as stable.

The rating reflects WDS' favorable operating performance and position in the dental market, and WDS is positioned for future growth in the dental plan and dental services markets.

A. M. Best Co., established in 1899, is the world's oldest and most authoritative insurance rating and information source. For Best's Ratings, an overview of the rating process and rating methodologies, visit Best's Rating Center at [www.ambest.com](http://www.ambest.com).

### Disclosure of Review Processes

Upon request, Western Dental Services, Inc., (WDS) will provide to you a copy of the guidelines and criteria that are used to make benefit determinations when dental providers submit requests to WDS for benefits and/or claims for payment. You may request this information by writing to

Western Dental Services, Inc.  
P.O. Box 14227  
Orange, CA 92863

or by contacting WDS Member Services at (800) 992-3366. This information will be provided when requested by a provider, enrollee or a member of the general public.

## ONLY YOU CAN PREVENT DENTAL DISEASE !

With computers and the internet, we are truly living in the age of information. Every day we can use that information to help us make decisions to improve our lives. Believe it or not, one area where there is no shortage of information available is dental health. There are numerous websites covering a wide array of dental topics. If you take the time to view them, you will come to one obvious conclusion, **ONLY YOU CAN PREVENT DENTAL DISEASE**. The dentists at the Western Dental Centers and the WDS Provider Offices can offer a number of preventive services to you, but it is up to you to take the time to go to the dental office to receive those services, and it is up to you to maintain preventive habits at home.

At your Western Dental Center or WDS Provider Office, you should ask your dentist which preventive services are right for you. Available services include fluorides to make your teeth more decay resistant, sealants to make the biting surfaces of back teeth more decay resistant, anti-microbial rinses to lower the numbers of oral bacteria, as well as cleanings and preventive treatments for those who have gum disease. You can discuss these services with your dentist by calling your selected office (the office's telephone number is printed on your WDS identification card) or calling the WDS Member Services Department at (800) 992-3366.

At home, you should follow a preventive daily oral hygiene regimen such as this one recommended by the American Dental Association (ADA):

- Brush your teeth twice a day with an ADA-accepted fluoride toothpaste.
  - Clean between teeth daily with floss or an interdental cleaner. Decay-causing bacteria still linger between teeth where toothbrush bristles can't reach. Flossing removes plaque and food particles from between the teeth and under the gum line.
  - Eat a balanced diet and limit between-meal snacks.
- Remember to change your toothbrush every 3-4 months or sooner if the bristles become frayed.

In addition to the above there are a variety of useful products that can reduce disease-causing oral bacteria, including mechanical toothbrushes, irrigating devices, fluoride rinses and chewing gum that contains "xylitol" as its sugar. Ask your dentist which products might be helpful for you.

But remember, in order to achieve the beneficial effect from the above preventive measures, you must practice them regularly and **YOU CAN PREVENT DENTAL DISEASE !**

# WESTERN DENTAL SERVICES, INC.

## SECOND OPINIONS

A WDS enrollee or the WDS Provider may request a second opinion consultation by writing or calling the WDS Member Services Department at (800) 992-3366. For routine second opinion requests, a decision will be made within five business days of receipt of the request; urgent requests will be processed within 72 hours of receipt of the request. When possible, the decision will be communicated to the enrollee verbally and/or in writing within two business days of the decision. The enrollee is only responsible for the applicable copayment as set forth in the "Schedule of Benefits" section of your Evidence of Coverage Booklet.

Please note that all treatment, including the second opinion consultation, must be performed by a WDS Participating Provider, and that the second opinion consultation must be requested and approved by WDS prior to the consultation, for the services to be covered under the WDS benefit plan.

## XYLITOL PRODUCTS

As early as the 1970s, the use of xylitol-sugared chewing gum was shown to decrease the decay rate in patient studies. In two *Journal of Dental Research* articles, Swedish researchers took that premise one step further when they reported evidence that regular xylitol consumption by mothers was associated with a reduction in the mother-child transmission of decay-causing bacteria, and that the maternal use of xylitol gum can thereby prevent dental decay in their children. In the first article, the researchers reported that there was a detectable level of decay-causing bacteria in only 9.7% of the two year old children of mothers who chewed xylitol chewing gum 2 to 3 times a day, starting three months after delivery, versus 48.5% in the group of children whose mothers did not chew the xylitol gum. In a second article, the researchers reported that at 5 years of age, the children in the xylitol group showed a 70% reduction in cavities compared to the other group. Note that these results were obtained in the children, who did not chew the gum themselves (the decay reduction of the mothers who chewed the xylitol gum was not reported in these articles, but similar decay reduction effects have been reported in other articles). Thus, the cleansing effects of gum chewing alone did not influence the results. One message to be drawn from these studies is that all patients, but especially those who have had dental decay, could benefit from chewing xylitol-sugared chewing gum, or by using other xylitol-sugared products instead of sucrose-sugared products. The second message is that mothers can reduce decay rates in their young children by reducing decay-causing bacteria in their own mouths. Xylitol chewing gum and mints may be purchased at vitamin and health food stores. If you are interested in reading more about the studies, the *Journal of Dental Research* articles can be found at <http://idr.iadrjournals.org> Volume 79 2000

## TOOTH WHITENING

With the popularity of the "makeover" shows on TV, many WDS enrollees are asking how they can improve their smiles. One answer is tooth whitening. Tooth whitening can be accomplished with in-office bleaching (such as "Zoom"), at home bleaching (such as "Nite White"), or with whitening toothpastes. These products contain peroxide that helps remove deep (intrinsic) and surface (extrinsic) stains. The American Dental Association (ADA) reports that bleaching is effective in whitening teeth. The most common side effects of bleaching are temporary tooth sensitivity and occasional irritation of oral tissues. The ADA advises that a thorough oral examination, performed by a licensed dentist, is essential to determine if bleaching is an appropriate course of treatment. So, at your next visit, ask your WDS Provider if tooth whitening is for you!

## INQUIRIES and COMPLAINTS

Enrollees are encouraged to contact WDS at (800) 992-3366 regarding any concerns that they may have while obtaining services. WDS maintains a grievance process to address these concerns. Enrollee complaints or grievances can be made in person, at any WDS Provider Office, by obtaining a WDS Member Incident Form and submitting it to WDS, or by submitting the complaint using the WDS website at [www.westerndental.com](http://www.westerndental.com). WDS will send notification that the complaint has been received within five calendar days of receiving the complaint, and WDS will send a written response to the concerns within 30 days of receipt of the complaint.

The California Department of Managed Health Care is responsible for regulating health care service plans. If you have a grievance against your Health Plan, you should first telephone your Health Plan at **1-800-992-3366** and use your Health Plan's grievance process before contacting the Department. Utilizing this grievance procedure does not prohibit any potential legal rights or remedies that may be available to you. If you need help with a grievance involving an emergency, a grievance that has not been satisfactorily resolved by your Health Plan, or a grievance that has remained unresolved for more than 30 days, you may call the Department for assistance. You may also be eligible for an Independent Medical Review (IMR). If you are eligible for IMR, the IMR process will provide an impartial review of medical decisions made by a Health Plan related to the medical necessity of a proposed service or treatment, coverage decisions for treatments that are experimental or investigational in nature and payment disputes for emergency or urgent medical services. The Department also has a toll-free telephone number (**1-888-HMO-2219**) and a TDD line (**1-877-688-9891**) for the hearing and speech impaired. The Department's Internet Web site <http://www.hmohelp.ca.gov> has complaint forms, IMR application forms, and instructions online.