

Common Consumer Mistakes When Buying Dental Insurance

Dental insurance is designed to pay a portion of the costs associated with dental care.

According to one study, 25% of all out-of-pocket health-care costs were related to dental services

Given the effect of the uncertainty of out-of-pocket costs during retirement, when most seniors are on a fixed budget, it is particularly critical to understand the options available while avoiding the most common mistakes that many consumers end up making. Below are the top mistakes and how to avoid them.

- 1. Shopping for the cheapest insurance provider without regards to the other essential factors**
 - As with most insurance policies, there are a number of moving parts within a dental insurance plan. From the premium to the copays and deductibles, each factor of the coverage should be taken into account to make the decision on the suitability of the plan.
- 2. Not shopping for the best priced coverage (once you have determined the type of policy that is suitable and the coverage features that are desired)**
 - The pricing on dental insurance plans is not standardized and there is quite a bit of variation of the premiums charged for the exact same benefits. Just as you want to make sure that you are factoring into your decision more than just the price, you also want to make sure you are giving yourself a good sense of the competitiveness of the pricing in the marketplace
- 3. Realizing the insurance policy isn't covering enough, or the appropriate type of services**
 - Since there are so many types of dental care, you want to make sure that the particular dental insurance coverage that you purchase explicitly covers the services that you bought it for, as well as provides coverage for the unforeseen but high-risk (and high out-of-pocket cost) services that you may need in the future
- 4. Not understanding the difference between a dental insurance plan and a dental savings plan**
 - Many consumers, especially Seniors, get confused by this distinction. These are two different types of planning tools. This problem most often arises when consumers are actually shopping for a dental insurance plan, and then end up with a much less comprehensive dental savings plan. A dental insurance plan works just like other types of health insurance and has copays, deductibles, and coinsurance for the different types of dental services one may need, and generally covers the costs of those services much more substantially. Because of this, dental insurance plans have a higher premium than dental savings plans. Dental savings plans (sometimes call "discount dental plans") are not dental insurance plans but discount programs

instead. Participating dentists have agreed to accept a discounted fee from discount dental plan members as payment-in-full for dental services performed. Sometimes these plans can be more suitable and cost effective, but you just want to make sure you know what you are getting before you make the purchase.

5. Realizing the Insurance is not taken by your preferred provider

- this is one of the more common mistakes that consumers make with dental insurance, and it is one of the most simple to prevent. As you are evaluating your dental insurance coverage options, before you make your purchase, make sure to specifically check or ask that your particular dentist or provider takes that coverage. An alternative way to determine this is to just ask your dentist or dental provider directly.

6. Not understanding what dental services Medicare will pay for

- As a Medicare beneficiaries you are entitled to a substantial amount of healthcare benefits through the Medicare program. While Original Medicare (Parts A and B) do not cover a comprehensive amount of dental benefits, they do cover a few aspects of care related to your teeth, gums, and mouth. Medicare will cover anything that is considered "medically necessary" that can be classified as "major or restorative". This includes major surgeries and reconstruction, but not checkups, root canals, or dentures, among most other common dental services. So while this is not enough to rely on for your overall dental needs, it is important to know where it comes in.