

A Q&A WITH ANDREA SACKS, DDS

# Understanding the importance of a healthy smile

**BrightSmile**  
for Students

Oral care is a gateway to total health and a core need for young people. We sat down with Andrea Sacks, DDS, Dental Director for PrimeCare Benefits Group to learn more about how critical a healthy mouth is to daily life, especially among college-age students.

## Can you tell us how or why oral care is connected to total health?

Poor oral health that leads to periodontal (gum) disease has been linked to other more severe overall health issues including heart attacks, diabetes, stroke and even premature births or low birth weight. Furthermore, the visible signs of poor oral health can affect one's psychological development and self-esteem.

## Interesting! So, are you saying oral care plays a role in how we see ourselves and our overall success in life?

Well it's difficult to say how different people evaluate themselves, but oral health, good or bad, does impact many areas of life – in daily activities like smiling, eating and talking, in relationships, communicating and in our jobs. Like any part of the human body, teeth, mouths and smiles are unique. Just because your teeth aren't perfectly aligned doesn't mean you have bad oral health, but many people believe straight, bright white teeth can help you get ahead in life - likely due to the rise of social media influencers, beauty trends and good old fashioned peer pressure.

## The American Dental Association has indicated that young people age 18-34 want to go to the dentist but don't because of cost or access to care<sup>1</sup>. How does dental insurance help?

Dental insurance can help mitigate some of the costs associated with dental care. Allowing patients to afford preventative services, such as regular exams and cleanings, can help reduce the possibility of more expensive treatment later.

## Is it a good idea for colleges and universities to offer, or even require, dental coverage for their student population?

Absolutely, yes! Not everyone entering college has had access to care so, like many opportunities you find in a college setting, offering a dental plan affords some students access to a dentist for the first time in their life. Also, at that age, people are transitioning to independent adulthood and dropping off of their parents' insurance plans, so providing access to oral care at that life moment is key to developing a lifetime of good habits.



## Andrea Sacks, DDS

DENTAL DIRECTOR, PRIMECARE BENEFITS GROUP, INC.

Dr. Sacks has been in the dental benefits industry for seven years, following 16 in general dentistry. Prior to that, Dr. Sacks served in the United States military as a Captain in the Army. She is a California Association of Dental Plans Certified Quality Assurance Consultant and a member of the American Dental Association, the Nevada Dental Association and the Southern Nevada Dental Society.

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1. "Oral Health and Well-Being in the United States," American Dental Association Health Policy Institute, 2015. ([www.ada.org/~media/ADA/Science%20and%20Research/HPI/OralHealthWell-Being-StateFacts/US-Oral-Health-Well-Being.pdf?la=en](http://www.ada.org/~media/ADA/Science%20and%20Research/HPI/OralHealthWell-Being-StateFacts/US-Oral-Health-Well-Being.pdf?la=en))

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