



Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey

Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey understands that my dentist can spot serious health risks like osteoporosis.



## Osteoporosis and Dental Care

**Although osteoporosis is often called “the silent disease,” your dentist may be able to spot the early signs.**

Osteoporosis is a disease in which bones lose their density, becoming fragile and more likely to break.

The disease is considered a major public health threat for an estimated 44 million Americans, or 55 percent of people ages 50 and older. An estimated 10 million individuals in the United States already have the disease, and an estimated 34 million have low-bone mass, placing them at risk for osteoporosis.

Although it is one of the most common bone diseases, there are very few early warning signs of osteoporosis, making it difficult to detect in the early stages when it is most treatable.

Quite often, patients don't realize they have osteoporosis or are at risk until they suffer a fracture, usually of the hip, spine or wrist. However, seeing a dentist regularly can improve chances of early detection.

According to the American Dental Association, when dentists observe bone loss in the jaw from mouth X-rays, it may be a sign of bone loss in other parts of the body, signaling osteoporosis.

A dentist may be the first health care professional to suspect a patient has osteoporosis based on the patient's medical history, including risk factors and results of clinical and X-ray examinations. If osteoporosis is suspected, the dentist can then refer the patient to his/her physician for further evaluation.

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# Signs of osteoporosis

- Loose teeth
- Gums separating from teeth
- Difficulty eating or speaking
- Severe gum disease
- Dentures that don't fit well

Be sure to visit your dentist regularly ...  
it may improve your overall health.

Sources: American Dental Association  
The National Osteoporosis Foundation