

Benefits Spotlight

News for *You*. News to *Share* with your Employees.

Teledentistry 101

For years, we've relied on our phones and computers to get a lot of things done. But it wasn't until the COVID-19 pandemic that we saw how far we could go and how much we could get done digitally. The uncertainty around the virus sparked the cancellation of preventive dental visits and in-person exams. Faced with the dilemma of how to safely access oral healthcare, many patients and dentists turned to teledentistry.

Teledentistry offers a host of benefits, including:

- Avoiding the emergency room when dental problems occur outside of regular clinic hours
- Convenience when a dental office is far away
- Access to care when you're traveling
- Limiting the spread of illness

But it's important to understand that teledentistry isn't a replacement for in-person dental care – and your twice-yearly dental visits can't be performed by teledentistry. Still, virtual dentistry offers an additional way for patients and dentists to connect, which is always a good thing.

What Is Teledentistry?

Teledentistry's roots date back to the 1970s, but the term "teledentistry" wasn't coined until 1997.¹ The practice of teledentistry involves working with a dental provider via phone or web (email or video chat, for example) to diagnose and treat a dental problem. A teledentistry visit may also be used to determine whether an in-person dental appointment is needed to adequately treat the problem.

Many people who live in rural areas where traveling to a dentist is difficult have long benefited from being able to access care from their own homes. But with COVID-19, more patients are also considering teledentistry visits as a way to lower their risk of spreading or contracting an illness.

An important note about teledentistry is that care must not be compromised due to the digital setting. You can read more about this in the American Dental Association's (ADA) Policy on Teledentistry.

How Do I Use Teledentistry?

A good first step is to check with your in-network dental provider to see if they offer virtual visits. If so, ask about the process to set up an appointment. Your dentist will take care of billing your appointment to your dental insurance.

Once you have a virtual appointment scheduled, you'll want to ensure you have the right technology to ensure a smooth visit. This may include downloading a mobile app or software on your computer.

Delta Dental Virtual Visits: A No-Cost Option for Delta Dental of Iowa Plan Members

If your dentist does not offer teledentistry, Delta Dental of Iowa members may access virtual dental consultations through TeleDentistry.com for dental emergencies. This benefit, known as Delta Dental Virtual Visits, has no additional cost to Delta Dental of Iowa members.

A major benefit of Delta Dental Virtual Visits is that it may reduce the need to go to the emergency room. Dentists with TeleDentistry.com may provide consultations and write prescriptions. If the dentist isn't able to diagnose or appropriately treat, he or she will refer you to an in-network dentist and provide all notes from the virtual visit to that dentist so you have a seamless experience.

Although Delta Dental Virtual Visits is a no-cost benefit, your plan may limit the number of times you can use it during the plan year. If you have questions about the frequency limits as it relates to your plan, please reach out to a Customer Service Representative by filling out our online form or calling the number on the back of your Delta Dental of Iowa ID card.

REFERENCE:

1. <https://www.jorr.org/article.asp?issn=2249-4987;year=2015;volume=7;issue=2;spage=77;epage=79;aulast=Rana>

SOURCES:

<https://www.ada.org/about/governance/current-policies/ada-policy-on-teledentistry>
<https://www.deltadentalia.com/a-healthy-life/dental-health/emerging-teeth-trend-teledentistry/>
<https://www.deltadental.com/us/en/protect-my-smile/visiting-the-dentist/teledentistry.html>
<https://www.deltadentalia.com/about-us/news/corporate/teledentistry/>

Fall Festive Recipe: Stuffed Butternut Squash

Eating seasonally is a good idea any time of year, but there's something extra delicious about fall's bounty. A wide variety of produce is harvested in the fall, including the star of this recipe: butternut squash.

But squash isn't the only nutritional powerhouse packed into this fresh and flavorful dish – kale, quinoa, cranberries and chickpeas come together to deliver a highly satisfying and delicious vegetarian meal. We'll show you how to make it, but first, here's why you should.

Stuffed Butternut Squash Ingredient Spotlight

This stuffed butternut squash recipe contains several nutrients that support your oral and overall health. Each ingredient below has a long list of health benefits, but here are the highlights.

- Butternut squash: Contains calcium, phosphorus and vitamins A and C, nutrients that play a huge role in teeth and gum health.
- Quinoa: Boasts a high fiber content and is linked to lowered diabetes risk. Researchers have found strong links between diabetes and gum disease.
- Kale: Dark leafy green veggies like kale are packed with vitamins A and C, which support your teeth and gums.
- Chickpeas: This legume boasts phosphorus and folic acid, two nutrients that help keep teeth strong.
- Cranberries: Fresh cranberries can help ward off the bad bacteria that likes to stick onto teeth and gums, leading to cavities and gum disease. However, be careful about dried cranberries, which can contain a lot of added sugar and wipe out the health benefits.

Ingredients:

2 medium butternut squash, cut in half and seeds scooped out
2 tablespoons olive oil
Kosher salt, to taste
Black pepper, to taste
1½ cups chicken broth
¾ cup uncooked quinoa
1 bunch kale, chopped with stems removed
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 teaspoon dried oregano
⅓ cup fresh cranberries
15 ounces canned chickpeas, rinsed
Zest of 1 orange
1 tablespoon orange juice
Parmesan cheese, grated

Directions:

1. Heat oven to 425 F. Cover a baking sheet with foil or parchment paper and lay the butternut squash on top with the cut side up. Drizzle 1 tablespoon olive oil on the squash and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Bake 45 to 55 minutes until the squash is tender (you can tell if it's tender by inserting a fork into the flesh; if the fork comes out easily, it's done). Set the squash aside to fully cool down. Reduce the oven temperature to 375 F.
2. While the squash is baking, bring the chicken broth to a boil in a small saucepan, then add quinoa. Once boiling again, reduce the heat to low, cover and simmer for 12 minutes. Remove the pot from heat and let it sit covered for 15 minutes.
3. Heat 1 tablespoon olive oil over medium heat in a large skillet. Add the kale to the skillet and cook for 4 minutes until wilted, then reduce heat to medium low. Mix in garlic, oregano, salt and pepper. Cook 30 seconds until fragrant. Stir in cooked quinoa, cranberries, chickpeas, orange zest and orange juice until everything is incorporated.
4. Scoop the filling into the squash halves. You may need to remove some of the flesh from the cooled squash to make room for the filling. Once filled, place on a baking sheet and bake for 10 minutes. You may sprinkle the tops with cheese shortly before removing from the oven or shortly after you take them out. Serve warm and savor the flavors of fall!