

## DENTAL SERVICES

**Oral health is important for everyone. For people with HIV, treating problems with mouth, teeth and gums is even more critical.**

Oral problems can be caused by HIV infection directly or by medication used to treat HIV. It is important to address pain, bleeding, trouble eating, or other problems with your mouth, teeth and gums as soon as they start. You can prevent oral disease by having regular checkups with a dental provider.

### **What HIV-Related Oral Health Problems Are Common?**

- > Loss of teeth
- > Dry mouth. Saliva can prevent infection from bacteria and fungi in the mouth, as well as prevent tooth decay. When saliva is not present, problems may occur.
- > Problems with chewing or swallowing. Many oral health issues can make it hard for you to chew, including medication side effects or sores inside your mouth or on your lips. When chewing and swallowing are painful, you can become malnourished..
- > Sores. *Causes of oral sores include:*
  - **Aphthous ulcers.** Red sores that have a yellow film on top, usually the moveable parts of the mouth (gums, roof of mouth and throat).
  - **Oral herpes.** Red sores on the inside of the mouth. Often referred to as cold sores and fever blisters.
  - **Hairy Leukoplakia.** Thick and hair-like white patches on the tongue, inside cheeks and lips.
  - **Candidiasis.** White or yellowish patches.
  - **Warts.** Small white, gray, or pinkish rough bumps on the lips or other moveable parts of the mouth.

### **What Kinds of Services Are Available?**

HIV dental clinics in Los Angeles County provide a range of services for people with HIV. Other clinics, hospitals and schools also provide services but do not specialize in HIV. All dental clinics should practice universal precautions, including the use of gloves, goggles, and face masks, which protect against transmission of infectious diseases.

*Services available by these resources include:*

- > Tooth extractions
- > Root canals
- > Fillings
- > Oral surgery
- > Preventive dentistry (including regular cleanings, X-rays, and check-ups)

### **Do You Need to Disclose Your HIV Status to a Dental Provider?**

You are not legally required to tell your dental provider that you have HIV. If your provider, however, fails to practice universal precautions when treating you, asking them to do so is advised. Universal precautions protect you, as well as your providers.

### **Are You Eligible for Services?**

Many dental providers in Los Angeles County who treat people with HIV are funded by the Ryan White CARE Act.

*In order to access dental services, be prepared to provide these documents:*

- > Proof of income (your most recent income tax return or recent pay stub)
- > Proof of California residence
- > Letter from your doctor documenting your HIV infection and tuberculosis clearance

Dental services may also be covered by a private insurance plan, Medi-Cal, or by another third-party. Many dental care providers accept donations from patients. When patient donations are requested, any amount is appreciated and helps to ensure that services continue.

Visit [www.hivla.org](http://www.hivla.org) for the most up-to-date Dental Care Providers listings.

**If dental services are not delivered appropriately, please contact OAPP's warmline @ (800) 260-8787.**