

Camp Hill, Pa. (Sept. 3, 2026) — [United Concordia Dental](#) and [PDS Health®](#), leaders in oral health and dental-medical integration, respectively, launched a saliva screening pilot in Southern California earlier this week that aims to improve oral health and overall health by investigating the screening's impact on periodontal (gum) disease management.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), [more than 40% of U.S. adults over the age of 30](#) have some form of gum disease. Left untreated, this condition can lead to tooth loss and infections and is associated with systemic conditions such as heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

"Gum disease is not just an oral health issue. It's closely connected to a person's well-being," said Ed Shellard, DMD, president and CEO of United Concordia. "This partnership with PDS Health underscores our shared commitment to dental-medical integration and allows us to empower patients with on-the-spot data about the current status of their gum health."

The pilot is expected to span up to 18 months and plans to measure levels of active Matrix Metalloproteinase-8 (aMMP-8), a biomarker associated with collagen breakdown and active periodontal tissue destruction, among approximately 1,500 – 2,000 eligible United Concordia members diagnosed with or at risk for gum disease and undergoing treatment. The pilot will take place at nearly 125 PDS Health dental practices in Southern California.

"This pilot reflects our commitment to connecting oral health and overall health in a measurable way for the patients and members we serve together with United Concordia," said Jeremy Jonckheere, vice president of strategic payor partnerships at PDS Health. "By bringing saliva screening into everyday periodontal care, we're giving patients real insight into their periodontal health and helping them stay engaged in the treatment plans their dentists recommend."

Advancing prevention through data-driven care

The pilot will evaluate the role saliva screening may play in periodontal disease management and future benefit design by:

- Assessing its ability to motivate patients to actively manage their gum disease and follow treatment plans recommended by their dentist; and
- Using results data to investigate when appropriate education interventions may be needed to support at-home care and better inform benefit design for covering saliva screening during gum disease treatment.

How the pilot works

Participation in the pilot is voluntary. United Concordia will fund the saliva screenings at no cost to eligible members diagnosed with gum disease.

Additional screenings will be administered at follow-up periodontal appointments throughout the duration of the pilot to measure a participant's aMMP-8 level at different points during treatment, helping clinicians assess changes in disease activity and the participant's response to treatment over time. Self-reported surveys will also evaluate how often patients are flossing, brushing and caring for their oral health at home.

"A patient's dental care routine at home is just as important as the professional scaling and root planing treatments they receive in the office," said Shellard. "By incorporating saliva screening into routine gum disease management, we have an opportunity to better engage patients in their care, improve clinical outcomes and support more personalized treatment approaches."

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