



HEALTH MATTERS

A PUBLICATION FOR TRICARE® BENEFICIARIES

The Dentist Is In ...

Tips for Communicating With Your Dentist



ISSUE 3 | 2024

ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS

Finding the Right TRICARE Dental Program Dentist After a PCS

Learn how to find a new network dentist and explore the benefits of staying in-network. **See page 2.**

Understanding Dental Specialists

Learn about types of dental specialists and how they can improve your oral health. **See page 4.**

Protecting Your Smile: Understanding Bruxism

Know the signs of bruxism and learn how you can mitigate the effects. **See page 6.**



U.S. Air Force Col.
Linda Coates
Chief, TRICARE Dental
Care Section
Defense Health Agency

Do you have a dental check-up soon? You may be wondering what your dentist will tell you about the condition of your teeth—especially if you haven't been to the dentist in a while.

The good news is that communication with your dentist is a two-way street. It's important to share questions or concerns about your oral health with your dentist. And you don't need to wait until you have a toothache or other dental issue to start the conversation. Speak up during your routine dental check up so you can make the most of your appointment.

Have questions about preventive dental care? Here are some things you can ask your dentist or dental hygienist at your next routine dental checkup:

- Do you see any areas where I can improve my flossing or brushing?
- What kind of toothbrush and floss should I use? Are there any other products or tools that I should be using as part of my normal oral health routine?
- Do you see any issues with my gums or other areas of my mouth?

During your visit, your dentist will likely bring up any areas where they think you can improve your oral health routine. If they notice cavities or other issues, they may recommend certain treatments, like fillings or root canals.

Feel free to ask any questions you may have if your dentist recommends treatment. You can ask questions like:

- What does this treatment entail, and how long does it take?
- What does the recovery look like?
- Are there any risks or side effects? What are the risks if I choose not to get this treatment?
- Are there any other treatment options you'd recommend?
- What are the costs for this treatment?

Get into the habit of speaking with your dentist about questions and concerns—you'll feel good that you're taking the right steps in your oral care routine.

Thank you,
Col. Linda Coates

An Important Note About TRICARE Program Information: At the time of publication, this information is current. It's important to remember that TRICARE policies and benefits are governed by public law and federal regulations. Changes to TRICARE programs are continually made as public law and/or federal regulations are amended. For the most recent information, contact the TRICARE Dental Program contractor.

Finding the Right TRICARE Dental Program Dentist After a PCS

Relocating can be an exciting but stressful time. Worrying about your family's dental needs shouldn't be part of the stress. Here's a guide to help you find a dentist and understand the advantages of choosing a network provider with the TRICARE Dental Program.

How to find a new network dentist

Using the Find a Dentist tool is the easiest way to find a network dentist online. In the U.S., this tool lets you search for network dentists in your new area by entering your city, state, and ZIP code. You can access the Find a Dentist tool at www.uccitdp.com/find-a-dentist.

Want to speak with a representative? Call United Concordia's customer service line and they'll help you find a network dentist close to your new location. For locations in the CONUS service area, you can reach United Concordia at **844-653-4061**. The CONUS service area includes the 50 United States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Before you pick a new dentist, update your address in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System. The TDP uses DEERS to verify eligibility, and accurate information will help you avoid delays in getting dental services. Learn more about DEERS at www.tricare.mil/deers.



Advantages of choosing a network dentist

Lower costs

Network dentists agree to provide services at specific rates. You typically only pay the applicable cost-share, which means you have lower costs when seeing a network dentist.

Network dentists agree to the terms set by United Concordia, which means they won't bill you over what is allowed for covered services. You'll have peace of mind knowing you won't be surprised by high bills.

Convenience

Network dentists also manage the claims process for you. They submit claims directly to United Concordia, reducing stress on your end. This process may allow your claims to be processed more quickly and paid faster.

Quality

United Concordia monitors its network to make sure that the dentists are billing correctly and meeting specific standards of care. By choosing a network provider, you can be confident in the quality and consistency of your family's dental care.

Preventive services

Certain services, such as cleanings, exams, or sealants for children, are covered at no cost when performed by network dentists. These preventive services promote overall oral health.

Enhanced benefits

The TDP Wellness Program offers additional benefits for conditions like diabetes and heart disease. These programs are easy to access and come at no extra cost when working with a network dentist.

A PCS to a new location doesn't mean compromising your family's dental care. By choosing a network dentist, you can ensure continuous, quality dental care, minimize out-of-pocket costs, and avoid paperwork.

For more information, check out the *TRICARE Dental Program Handbook* at www.tricare.mil/publications. To find a network dentist near you, use the Find a Dentist tool. ★

OCONUS Dental Provider Options

Are you going overseas? You can still access your dental benefits while living outside the continental U.S. The OCONUS service area includes all areas outside the CONUS service area and covered services provided on a ship or vessel outside the territorial waters of the CONUS service area. You can get dental care from any licensed and authorized dentist. But it's often more convenient to get care from a TRICARE OCONUS Preferred Dentist.

Benefits of using a TOPD

- TOPDs won't require you to pay their full charge at the time of service, only your applicable cost-share, if any.
- TOPDs handle claims and bill United Concordia directly, so you don't have to.

Finding a dentist

- Use the Find a Dentist tool on the United Concordia website and select "Dentists OCONUS" to find a TOPD in your area.
- If you need help, call United Concordia's OCONUS customer service line. Visit United Concordia's website and click "Contact Us."

For more information, visit www.uccitdp.com. ★

Understanding Dental Specialists

As a TRICARE Dental Program member, you might need to see different types of dentists for specific tooth and mouth problems. Luckily, the TDP offers a wide range of specialists in CONUS and

OCONUS locations. You can go United Concordia's website, www.uccitdp.com, and select the Find a Dentist tool to find specialists near you.

Here's an easy-to-understand guide to these dental specialties:

1. Endodontists

These dentists are experts at treating the inside of teeth. If you have severe tooth pain or need a root canal, an endodontist is the person to see. They use special tools to fix the soft inner part of your tooth, including the nerves and blood vessels.

2. Oral/maxillofacial surgeons

These specialists do surgery on your mouth, jaw, and face. They can remove wisdom teeth or other difficult-to-pull teeth. They also put in dental implants (artificial tooth roots) and can fix jaw problems or facial injuries. If you need any kind of surgery in your mouth area, you'll likely see this type of dentist.

3. Orthodontists

Orthodontists straighten teeth and fix bite problems. They use braces, clear aligners, and other devices to move teeth into better positions. This can improve how your teeth look and work. If your teeth are crooked or your jaw doesn't line up correctly, an orthodontist can help.

4. Pediatric dentists

These are dentists just for kids, from babies to teenagers. They take care of children's teeth. Pediatric dentists know how to make dental visits less scary for kids. They're good at spotting and fixing problems in growing mouths and can teach kids how to take care of their teeth.



5. Periodontists

Periodontists focus on gum health and the bones that support your teeth. If you have serious gum disease or loose teeth or need a deep cleaning under your gums, a periodontist can help. They can also do gum grafts (adding tissue to your gums) and place dental implants.

6. Prosthodontists

These dentists specialize in replacing missing teeth and restoring damaged ones. They make and fit things like crowns (caps for damaged teeth), bridges (fake teeth attached to your real teeth), dentures (removable fake teeth), and dental implants. If you're missing teeth or have badly damaged teeth, a prosthodontist can help restore your smile.

7. Multi-specialist groups

Some dental offices have many different specialists working together. This can be helpful if you have a complex dental

problem that needs more than one type of expert. For example, you might need an oral surgeon to remove a tooth and a prosthodontist to replace it.

Before you go to a specialist, it's a good idea to make sure the specialist's services are covered. A TDP network dentist can submit a pre-authorization request on your behalf to determine your out-of-pocket costs.

If you have questions about your dental benefits or need help understanding what's covered, you can call United Concordia.

Remember, taking care of your teeth and gums is an important part of your overall health. Don't hesitate to ask questions or seek help when you need it. ★

Removing Wisdom Teeth Under the TRICARE Dental Program

Wisdom teeth, also called third molars, usually appear between ages 17 and 25. Sometimes, these teeth come in without problems. But often, they can cause issues that require them to be removed.

When do you need wisdom teeth removed?

Your dentist might suggest removing wisdom teeth if:

1. They're impacted (stuck under the gums).
2. They grow in at the wrong angle.
3. They're too big for the size of your mouth.
4. They cause pain or swelling.
5. They're hard to clean, leading to cavities or gum disease.

How TDP covers wisdom teeth removal

Good news! The TDP covers wisdom teeth removal for most members. Here's what you need to know:

- For patients under 15 or over 30, removal of impacted wisdom teeth needs special approval.
- Your dentist must provide specific documentation showing why removal is necessary.
- There's no waiting period—you're covered as soon as you enroll.
- You can use any dentist, but network dentists may cost less.
- TDP covers anesthesia if it's needed for the procedure.

Remember to get an estimate from your dentist before the procedure. This helps you know what out-of-pocket costs to expect.

Taking care of wisdom teeth problems early can prevent more serious issues later. With TDP coverage, you can get the care you need without breaking the bank. ★

Protecting Your Smile: Understanding Bruxism

Bruxism is a common condition that can affect your teeth, jaws, and overall well-being. Understanding this condition and knowing how to address it can help protect your smile and improve your quality of life.

What is bruxism?

Bruxism is the medical term for teeth grinding or clenching. While many people grind their teeth, chronic bruxism can lead to serious dental problems. This condition often occurs during sleep, making it difficult for individuals to realize they have it. Stress, sleep disorders, or misaligned teeth can trigger bruxism.

Recognizing the signs

Common symptoms of bruxism include:

- Jaw pain
- Frequent headaches

- Worn, flattened, or chipped teeth
- Increased tooth sensitivity
- Tight or sore jaw muscles
- Earaches without an infection
- Difficulty or discomfort while chewing

If you're experiencing any of these symptoms, it's important to see your dentist for a diagnosis.

Reducing the effects

There are several strategies to manage these challenging conditions:

- **Night guards.** Custom-fitted by your dentist, these devices create a barrier between your upper and lower teeth. They protect your teeth from grinding.

- **Stress management.** Since stress is a common trigger for both conditions, practicing relaxation techniques or seeking therapy can help.
- **Improved sleep hygiene.** Keeping a consistent sleep schedule and creating a relaxing bedtime routine can help reduce nighttime teeth grinding.
- **Jaw exercises.** Your dentist can recommend specific exercises to strengthen and relax your jaw muscles.
- **Dietary changes.** Avoid hard foods and excessive gum chewing. These can exacerbate jaw pain.
- **Heat or cold therapy.** Applying warm compresses or ice packs to the jaw can help relieve pain and reduce inflammation.
- **Medications.** In some cases, your health care provider may recommend over-the-counter pain relievers or muscle relaxants.

How To Find Your TDP Costs

TRICARE Dental Program members pay monthly premiums, as well as cost-shares, if applicable. Monthly premiums are based on your sponsor's military status and your type of enrollment. Cost-shares vary, depending on the sponsor's pay grade and where you live.

Go to www.tricare.mil/tdpcosts to learn more about these costs.





Taking action

If you suspect you might be dealing with bruxism, don't wait to seek help. Early intervention can prevent long-term damage to your teeth and jaws, saving you from more extensive and costly treatments in the future. Contact your dentist to schedule an evaluation and discuss your symptoms.

Remember, your dental health is an integral part of your overall health and well-being. By staying informed and proactive, you can protect your smile and enjoy the benefits of good oral health for years to come. ★

What To Do if You Lose a Tooth

If you ever lose or crack a tooth, it's important to act fast. By taking the correct steps directly after this kind of dental emergency, you can minimize the damage to your tooth and increase the likelihood your tooth can be restored.

If you lose a tooth, you should see a dentist as soon as possible. Take these steps to protect your teeth until you reach the dentist:

- Recover the tooth, if possible.
- Hold the tooth from the top, not the root, and gently rinse the root with water, milk, or a saline solution. Don't scrub the tooth or remove attached tissue.
- In some cases, you can temporarily return the tooth to its socket after you've rinsed it off. Otherwise, place the tooth in a container with milk or a saline solution. Don't put it in water.

Depending on the severity of your tooth's damage, there are several options for restoration or replacement.

Minor chips and cracks can be treated with fillings or cosmetic contouring.

More severe cases, like when the root is damaged or the tooth falls out, will require either crowns or dental implants. ★



HEALTH MATTERS

United Concordia Companies, Inc.
TRICARE Dental Program
P.O. Box 69450
Harrisburg, PA 17106

Presorted
Standard
U.S. Postage
PAID

CHECK THIS OUT ...

What To Do if You Lose a Tooth

If you lose or crack a tooth, see a dentist as soon as possible. Learn how to protect your tooth until you reach the dentist. See page 7.



TRICARE is managed by the Defense Health Agency. TRICARE is a registered trademark of the Department of Defense, Defense Health Agency. All rights reserved.

HEALTH MATTERS

Manage Your Dental Coverage With *My Account*

Did you know you can access and manage your TRICARE Dental Program information in one place? With *My Account*, you can do many things, including:

- Review your dental benefits.
- Get cost estimates for dental procedures.
- View claim statements and dental explanations of benefits.
- Find a dentist near you.



Go to www.uccitdp.com to access *My Account*. You can log in to your *My Account* with your DS Logon. ★

TRICARE DENTAL PROGRAM RESOURCES

www.uccitdp.com

ENROLLMENT AND BILLING SERVICES

844-653-4061 (CONUS)

844-653-4060 (OCONUS)
+1-717-888-7400 (OCONUS)

711 (TDD/TTY)

CLAIMS FILING

CONUS:
United Concordia
TRICARE Dental Program
P.O. Box 69451
Harrisburg, PA 17106

OCONUS:
United Concordia
TRICARE Dental Program
P.O. Box 69452
Harrisburg, PA 17106

BENEFICIARY WEB ENROLLMENT

<https://milconnect.dmdc.osd.mil>