



HEALTH MATTERS

A PUBLICATION FOR TRICARE® BENEFICIARIES

The Dentist is In ...

Caring for Your Teeth in 2019



Col. James Honey
Chief, TRICARE Dental
Care Section
Defense Health Agency

Oral health is an ongoing process, not just a New Year's resolution. Because February is National Children's Dental Health Month, it's a great time to think about the health of your children's teeth as well as your own teeth. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Americans spend more than \$124 billion annually on dental care costs. Early preventive oral health practices are more comfortable and less costly than treating a dental problem. Follow these American Dental Association healthy dental habits to maintain a healthy smile all yearlong:

- **Always brush for two minutes twice a day.** This habit promotes a white smile, fresh breath, and healthy gums. To keep your kids engaged while brushing for two minutes, consider making brushing a game or having a two-minute dance party to their favorite song.
- **Floss daily.** Flossing daily removes plaque buildup and food particles between teeth that can cause gum irritation or tooth decay. Make flossing a daily habit for your family.
- **Eat a healthy diet and drink fluoridated water.** Choose foods that are low in sugar. Sugar consumption is the main cause of tooth decay in children. Vegetables, fruits, grains, and lean proteins are healthy and balanced options, and good for your teeth. Drinking water, especially fluoridated water, also helps strengthen tooth enamel.
- **Maintain regular dentist visits.** Regular dental cleanings and checkups, which are covered under the TRICARE Dental Program, can help you spot dental health problems early.

Make your entire family's dental health a priority this year. One way to stay updated on healthy habits throughout the year is to visit the "Health & Wellness" section at www.uccitdp.com.

Thank you,

Col. James Honey



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ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS

Teeth and Teens: Why Oral Piercings Spell Disaster for Your Dental Health

Although some teens and young adults may view oral piercings as a form of self-expression, mouth jewelry can be a serious danger to your oral health. See page 2.

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Tooth sensitivity can come as an unwanted burden to enjoying your favorite foods. See page 5.



Teeth and Teens: Why Oral Piercings Spell Disaster for Your Dental Health

Although some teens and young adults may view oral piercings as a form of self-expression, mouth jewelry can be a serious danger to your oral health. Common places oral piercings are usually seen are the tongue, lip, cheek, or uvula (the tissue hanging in the back of your throat). These piercings can cause you to have problems speaking, swallowing, or chewing.

According to the American Dental Association, bacteria in the mouth can cause infection and swelling in and around mouth piercings. If this swelling is severe, it could cause airway obstruction. If the jewelry is dislodged, it could lead to choking. Additional problems that oral piercings may cause include:

- **Infection, pain, and swelling.** Your mouth is a moist and vulnerable place for bacteria to breed infection. An infection can quickly become life threatening if not treated quickly.
 - **Damage to gums, teeth, and fillings.** A habit of biting or playing with the piercing may cause injury to your gums and lead to cracked, scratched, or sensitive teeth.
 - **Hypersensitivity to metals.** Some people experience an allergic reaction to the piercing.
 - **Nerve damage.** After a piercing, you may experience temporary or permanent nerve damage at the insertion site. The nerve injury could affect your taste buds or mouth movement.
 - **Excessive drooling.** A tongue piercing may increase saliva production, which could have unflattering affects.
 - **Dental appointment difficulties.** Oral jewelry may get in the way of dental care and prevent needed X-rays.
- If you already have an oral piercing, keep up with your mouth care by following these tips:
- Contact your dentist or doctor at any sign of infection, like swelling, pain, or fever.
 - Keep your piercing site clean from collecting food and particles.
 - Avoid clicking the jewelry against your teeth.
 - Check the tightness of your jewelry occasionally with clean hands. This can help prevent swallowing or choking if the jewelry becomes loose.
 - When playing sports, remove the jewelry and protect your mouth with a mouth guard.
 - See your dentist regularly, brush twice a day, and floss daily. ★

TRICARE Dental Program Eligibility and Enrollment

The TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) is a voluntary dental plan that's available worldwide (CONUS and OCONUS). Eligibility and enrollment in the TDP are outlined by beneficiary type and preferred method of enrollment.

Eligibility

United Concordia administers the TRICARE Dental Program. The TDP provides coverage for family members and legal dependents of active duty service members (ADSMs), eligible family members of National Guard and Reserve members, and National Guard and Reserve members who aren't on active duty or covered by the Transitional Assistance Management Program. ADSMs, retirees, and retiree family members get benefits through other plans.

Family members of ADSMs and National Guard and Reserve members include:

- Spouses
- Unmarried children until reaching age 21, including stepchildren, adopted children, and court-ordered wards
- Unmarried children of TRICARE-eligible sponsors until reaching age 21 (or age 23 if enrolled in a full-time course of study at an approved institution of higher learning and if the sponsor provides over 50 percent of the financial support)

Enrollment

There are three ways to enroll in the TDP through your active duty sponsor*: online, by mail, or by phone. Once your enrollment is processed, you'll begin

coverage on the next available effective date. Your effective date of coverage depends on the date United Concordia receives your enrollment application and first month's premium payment. For more on coverage effective dates, visit www.tricare.mil/tdp/effectivedate.

You'll know your enrollment is confirmed when you receive notification from the Defense Manpower Data Center. The TDP isn't responsible for paying for any dental care coverage until you're properly enrolled.

- **Online (CONUS only):** Go to the Beneficiary Web Enrollment website (www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/bwe). Click on the red "Log On" link at the top of the page. Select the "Dental" tab to enroll in a dental plan.
- **Phone:**
CONUS: 1-844-653-4061
OCONUS: 1-844-683-4060 / 1-717-888-7400 (Toll)
- **Mail:** Download the *TRICARE Dental Program Enrollment/Change Authorization Form*. Mail the form and the initial premium payment by check, money order, or credit card to United Concordia at:

United Concordia

TRICARE Dental Program
P.O. Box 645547
Pittsburgh, PA 15264-5253

Your enrollment could be denied if any information is missing from the TDP form or if the information doesn't match what's in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System.

**Someone with a power of attorney on file with the TDP contractor can add or remove a family member or end TDP enrollment if the sponsor isn't available.*

Minimum Enrollment Period

Once enrolled in the TDP, you're committed to 12 months of coverage, unless you qualify for an exception. After the 12-month period, you can continue on a month-to-month basis. If you want to end your TDP enrollment after 12 months, send a termination request to United Concordia. Your service will be terminated on the date United Concordia receives your request, not on the day you postmark it.

For more information about TDP eligibility and enrollment, check out these resources available at www.tricare.mil/tdp:

- *TRICARE Dental Options Fact Sheet*
- *TRICARE Dental Program Handbook*
- *TRICARE Dental Program Benefit Brochure* ★



Cater to Your Gums to Prevent Gingivitis

Gingivitis is the early stage of gum disease. Gum disease is an infection of the tissues that surround and support your teeth, caused by the buildup of plaque.

In the beginning stages of gum disease, you'll notice:

- Gums that bleed easily
- Red, swollen, tender gums
- Bad breath

You're at an increased risk for developing gingivitis if you're pregnant, smoke, chew tobacco, take certain drugs, fail to maintain proper dental care, or if you have diabetes. Although the prospect of gum disease can be overwhelming, it's reversible at the stage of gingivitis. You can get the infection treated by visiting your dentist for a cleaning or reestablishing brushing twice a day and flossing daily.

The biggest risk factor for gum disease is smoking. Additional risks may include hormonal changes in girls and women, medications that lessen the flow of saliva, certain illnesses and their medications, and genetics. Keep in mind gum disease may not always be recognizable, which is why regular dental checkups are important.

Symptoms of gum disease include:

- Bad breath that won't go away
- Red or swollen gums
- Tender or bleeding gums
- Painful chewing
- Loose teeth
- Sensitive teeth
- Receding gums or longer appearing teeth

To keep your teeth and gums healthy, follow these tips from the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research:

- Brush your teeth twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste.
- Floss regularly.
- Visit your dentist regularly for a check-up and professional cleaning.

Talk to your dentist to learn more about gingivitis. And find more tips on how to protect your gums at www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/g/gingivitis. ★

How to Combat Tooth Sensitivity

Tooth sensitivity can come as an unwanted burden to enjoying your favorite foods. According to the American Dental Association, dentin hypersensitivity or teeth sensitivity, comes when the enamel on your teeth is worn down and the dentin becomes exposed. Teeth sensitivity also comes when the gum line is irritated and starts to recede.

Possible causes of teeth sensitivity are:

- **Tooth decay (cavities):** A small hole in your tooth caused by the breakdown of tooth enamel (the hard outer surface of your teeth).
- **Fractured teeth:** Broken or cracked teeth caused from a tooth injury.
- **Worn fillings:** Fillings that have become outdated and possibly require refilling.
- **Gum disease:** An infection of the tissues that surround and support your teeth.
- **Worn tooth enamel:** Tooth enamel can become worn down from too much consumption of acidic foods.
- **Exposed tooth root:** When the gum line starts to recede and pull away from the tooth.

Your dentist can suggest ways to fix the underlying issue and reestablish comfort. The type of treatment will depend on what's causing the sensitivity. Your dentist may suggest one or more of these solutions to lessen your pain:

- Desensitizing toothpaste
- Fluoride gel
- A crown, inlay, or bonding
- Surgical gum graft
- Root canal

To try to prevent tooth sensitivity before it results in dental treatment, remember to brush twice a day, floss daily, and see your dentist for covered regular checkups using your TRICARE Dental Program coverage. Find more tips on healthy teeth at www.uccitdp.com. ★



ACCORDING TO THE AMERICAN DENTAL ASSOCIATION, DENTIN HYPERSENSITIVITY OR TEETH SENSITIVITY, COMES WHEN THE ENAMEL ON YOUR TEETH IS WORN DOWN AND THE DENTIN BECOMES EXPOSED.

Tips to Enjoy a Sweet, but Healthy Valentine's Day

Valentine's Day is known for its sweet treats and romantic dinners. But, the rule of thumb is everything in moderation. Your teeth will thank you later.

Whether planning a night out on the town or a quiet evening in, here are a few healthy dining tips from the American Dental Association:

- **Get the facts before you go.** Look up restaurant nutritional information before settling on a spot.
- **Dessert for two.** Consider ordering one dessert for two of you to share.
- **Make healthier alternatives to classic recipes.** Include more lean protein, whole grains, and vegetables into your Valentine's Day meal.
- **Timing matters.** Try to eat sweets and other sugary foods with meals or shortly after mealtime. Saliva production increases during meals and helps cancel out acids produced by bacteria in your mouth.
- **Watch out for sticky foods.** If you do eat sticky foods, make sure to rinse your mouth out with water, brush carefully, and floss.

Follow these tips to keep your February dental and heart health strong. For more information and tips, visit www.mouthhealthy.org/en/holiday-foods. ★



Common Dental Issues for Kids

February is National Children's Dental Health Month. This month and all year long, encourage your kids to establish and maintain good dental habits and keep them current with covered dental checkups through the TRICARE Dental Program (TDP). Teaching your children healthy dental habits early gets them used to a routine that they'll likely stick to as they grow older. Besides brushing twice a day and flossing every day, be aware of these childhood dental concerns:

- **Childhood cavities.** When your child's teeth start to come in, brush them gently and regularly with a child toothbrush and a little fluoride toothpaste. Place only formula, milk, or breast milk inside your child's bottle and avoid giving them sugary beverages, like juice or soda.
- **Dental emergencies.** Children are active and accidents happen. Be prepared to address any dental emergencies that may happen quickly to avoid permanent damage.
- **Thumb sucking.** Kids usually stop sucking their thumb by age 4. If your child's thumb sucking continues once their permanent teeth are in, it can cause problems with their tooth alignment and bite. If the habit persists, talk to your dentist or child's pediatrician.
- **Sealants.** Sealants act as a preventive measure against cavities in children and teens. Talk to your dentist to see if sealants are appropriate for your child. The TDP covers sealants for permanent molars through age 18.

For more information and tips related to children's dental health, visit the American Dental Association website at www.mouthhealthy.org/en/babies-and-kids/concerns. ★





**Color the Tooth
Healthy Foods!**



TRICARE TOOTH TIP

Eating foods such as fruits, vegetables, grains, and lean proteins can help promote tooth health. Stay away from eating too much sugar, like candy and cupcakes.



HEALTH MATTERS

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 TRICARE Dental Program
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 Harrisburg, PA 17106

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CHECK THIS OUT...

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See page 6.

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Current TRICARE Dental Program Premium Rates

The following table lists your TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) monthly premium rates. These premium rates are current through April 30, 2019. Premium amounts will be deducted from your military pay account or billed directly to you. Visit the TDP website, www.uccitdp.com, for more rates and information. ★

SPONSOR STATUS	SPONSOR-ONLY PREMIUM	SINGLE PREMIUM (one family member, not the sponsor)	FAMILY PREMIUM (more than one family member, not the sponsor)	SPONSOR-AND-FAMILY PREMIUM
Active Duty	N/A	\$11.39	\$29.62	N/A
Selected Reserve	\$11.39	\$28.48	\$74.05	\$85.44
Individual Ready Reserve	\$28.48	\$28.48	\$74.05	\$102.53

TRICARE DENTAL PROGRAM RESOURCES

www.uccitdp.com

ENROLLMENT AND BILLING SERVICES

1-844-653-4061 (CONUS)

1-844-653-4060 (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

www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/bwe