



HEALTH MATTERS

A PUBLICATION FOR TRICARE® BENEFICIARIES

The Mouth-Body Connection



Everyone wants a bright smile, fresh breath and pain-free teeth and gums. These are great benefits of good oral health; however, they're only part of the picture. Your oral health is essential to your overall wellness. Poor oral health can interfere with breathing, eating, swallowing, sleeping and speaking. Scientific research has established a link between oral infections and serious medical problems, such as:

- Diabetes
- Heart Disease
- Lupus
- Oral Cancer
- Rheumatoid Arthritis
- Stroke

There's a link between mouth and mind, too. Poor oral health can affect your self-image and self-esteem. Conditions like chronic pain, cold sores and oral yeast infections can get in the way of your everyday life, causing stress, depression and loss of energy. Be sure to practice good oral health habits to promote overall oral wellness and health.

Reducing Health Risks with Oral Care

1. Brushing and flossing are the foundation of good oral health. Remember to brush your teeth for at least two minutes, twice a day, and floss daily to get rid of food debris and plaque.
2. Visiting your dentist regularly for professional cleanings and exams can help overall wellness. Your dentist may find early signs of a health problem you didn't even know you had. Also, make sure you to inform your dentist about any changes to your mouth, including tender or swollen gums.
3. Consuming fewer sweets and sugary drinks can reduce the chance of tooth decay.
4. Drinking water throughout the day helps rinse the mouth and eliminate the acids that cause decay.



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Network Dentists in the Continental United States (CONUS)

What Is a Network Dentist?

A network dentist has signed a contractual agreement with United Concordia[®] to follow TDP rules for providing care and accepting United Concordia's negotiated fees as payment in full for covered services. You only pay the applicable cost-share for covered services, if any. While you can still receive care from any licensed dentist, your out-of-pocket costs could be higher with non-network dentists since they can charge you the difference between United Concordia's negotiated fees and their full charge.

Using a network dentist maximizes your dental benefits because they:

Save Money— Network dentists save you any cost difference between United Concordia's negotiated fees and the dentists' regular charges. You also stretch your benefit dollars, because paying less for care from a network dentist lets you receive more covered services before reaching your \$1,500 annual maximum.

Save Time—Network dentists file your claims for you, saving you time and the hassle of paperwork.

Save Worry—Every network dentist goes through rigorous initial and ongoing reviews, so you know you're getting high-quality care.

How to Find a Dentist

It's simple to search, compare and get directions to a CONUS network dentist with the *Find a Dentist* tool on www.uccitdp.com.

You can search by specialty, county, ZIP code, street address, dentist and/or practice name. If your dentist is not in our network, and you'd like him or her to participate, go to the *Forms and Material* section on www.uccitdp.com and select the Nominate Your Dentist form.

**Note: TDP enrollees who reside Outside the Continental United States (OCONUS) can locate TRICARE OCONUS Preferred Dentists (TOPDs) by using the Find a Dentist tool at www.uccitdp.com. This website also contains information on OCONUS cost-shares and TOPD specifics.*



Cavities in Your Child's Teeth and How You can Help Prevent Them

Use Fluoride

Fluoride use significantly reduces cavities in children. However, ingesting too much fluoride as a child can cause damage/discoloration of adult teeth. To help prevent cavities, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) suggests using a small amount of fluoride toothpaste, about the size of a grain of rice, for children under age 3. A pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste is recommended for kids aged 3 to 6, and they should be taught to spit, not swallow, the toothpaste.

Adopt Good Brushing Techniques

Proper brushing techniques are essential for cavity prevention in children. MedlinePlus suggests the following key brushing strategies for children with baby teeth:

- Use a soft-bristled toothbrush
- Brush twice a day (after breakfast and before bed)
- Focus on back teeth (molars) because these teeth are more at risk for cavity formation
- Brush in tiny circles on teeth and gums
- Always brush the tongue
- Floss teeth once daily
- Change to a new toothbrush every three to four months
- Help your child brush until he or she is 10 or 11 years old
- Get Regular Checkups

Taking your child to regular dental visits is key for cavity prevention in baby teeth. The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry suggests seeing a pediatric dentist as soon as your child's first baby tooth is visible or no later than their first birthday and every six months after that. During dental visits, your child will get professional teeth cleanings, x-rays when necessary, fluoride treatments, and sealant applications as needed.

Make Good Food Choices

Believe it or not, your child's diet significantly impacts their teeth. Consuming too much sugar such as candies, sweets, sugary drinks and starches such as white bread significantly boosts your child's risk for cavities. The AAP recommends limiting juice to 4 to 6 ounces per day for kids aged one to six, and 8 to 12 ounces daily for children aged 7 to 18.

Treat Cavities

While baby teeth do fall out eventually, it's still important to take good care of these teeth. Cavities in baby teeth can be painful for children, making it difficult to eat healthy foods such as fresh fruits and vegetables. Healthy baby teeth are important for proper speech development, and act as placeholders for adult teeth as they get ready to come through.

If your child does develop a cavity, it's crucial to seek treatment as soon as possible. Cavity – also known as decay – treatment for children usually involves removing the decayed part of the tooth and replacing it with a filling.

The Bottom Line

While you may not always be able to prevent cavities in your child's teeth, practicing good dental hygiene such as regular dental checkups, proper brushing and fluoride use and healthy eating reduces your child's risk for cavities — and teaches healthy habits that can last a lifetime.

TDP Benefit Reminder

Remember, all children covered under the TDP are eligible for three oral exams in a consecutive 12-month period. Two of three exams can be from the same provider. In order for the third exam to be covered, the child must see a different provider.



How You can Handle Four Common Dental Emergencies



Emergency #1: Damaged tooth

- Rinse your mouth out with warm water. Use a cold compress to reduce any swelling in the mouth. You can take over-the-counter pain medication, if your personal health conditions allow.

- If the tooth is chipped, find the chip, if possible. Put it in a plastic bag with a few drops of water or wrap it in wet gauze to keep it moist. See a dentist immediately to repair the tooth.

- If the tooth is cracked, avoid chewing on anything hard or sticky and visit your dentist as soon as possible.

Emergency #2: Lost tooth

- If a child's baby tooth is knocked out, keep the tooth moist by putting it in water or milk. See a dentist as soon as possible to determine if the tooth can be replaced.

- If an adult (permanent) tooth is knocked out, keep it moist. You can try putting the tooth back into the socket. Hold the tooth at the crown (the top part of the tooth you can usually see), being careful not to touch the root (bottom). If this is not an option, try keeping the tooth between your cheek and gums or place it in milk. Get to a dentist immediately.

Emergency #3: Painful toothache

- Rinse your mouth out with warm water. Use floss to gently remove debris that may be stuck between your teeth. Never use anything sharp and do not place aspirin directly on the painful area.

- If the pain continues or gets worse, go to a dentist or urgent care center – this could be a sign of a serious infection.

Emergency #4: Damaged braces

- For a loose or broken braces bracket, use orthodontic wax to hold it in place. If the bracket has fallen off completely, keep it and do not throw it away. Notify your orthodontist of the issue and set an appointment as soon as possible.

- If a wire from braces is broken, damaged or poking your mouth, use orthodontic wax to prevent discomfort and hold in place until you can see the orthodontist. If necessary, you may have to carefully clip damaged wires with sterile nail clippers, as close as possible to your teeth. Don't touch any teeth or gums with the nail clippers. Securely hold the wire being clipped with your other hand to prevent accidentally swallowing it. Tie 12 inches of floss to the nail clippers for easy retrieval if accidentally dropped into your mouth. Cover rough edges with wax.

How Healthy Nutrition can Reduce Your Risk of Cavities

How Does Sugar Contribute to Tooth Decay?

Your mouth is a natural breeding ground for bacteria and bacteria love to feast on sugar. When they do, harmful acids are created, which eat away at the hard outer layer of your teeth (the enamel) and cause tooth decay. For about 20 minutes after eating, your teeth are exposed to decay-causing acids. Eventually, your saliva neutralizes these acid attacks, but the more often you consume sugary, starchy foods throughout the day, the greater your risk of developing cavities.

Look for Healthy Alternatives

While sugary treats can be hard to resist, there are healthier food choices that can both satisfy your sweet tooth and eliminate hunger. Instead of reaching for a candy bar, bite into a fresh, crisp apple. Swapping out starchy pretzels for a handful of crunchy, raw veggies is another trade worth making for the sake of your teeth. Fluoridated water and milk (even chocolate milk) are great substitutes for sodas and sugary fruit juices.

In fact, according to the Academy of General Dentistry, dairy products are not only necessary for developing bones and teeth, they also reduce the acidity level in your mouth, helping to protect your teeth against decay. Additionally, cheese and some yogurts contain calcium and phosphorus compounds that are known to strengthen tooth enamel.

To get into the habit of eating healthy snacks, stock your fridge with lots of fresh fruits and veggies, yogurt, cheese and milk. Furthermore, keep a supply of sugarless gum, peanut butter and whole grain crackers in the pantry. Regularly reading food labels and checking for hidden sugars will also help keep you and your family on track to obtaining a nutritious diet.

Eat Sweets the Healthy Way

If you can't bring yourself to give up your favorite sweets, eat them only at the end of a meal. This limits the number of acid attacks your teeth are exposed to during the day. It also helps if you brush your teeth after eating. If you can't brush, at least do a "swish and swallow" with water or milk.

Keep in mind that some sugary foods—such as sticky, chewy or hard candies—can stick to your teeth, exposing your teeth to acids for extended periods of time. If you're craving a piece of candy, eat something that you can chew and swallow quickly and won't stick to your teeth.

A Surprisingly Good Sugar

While this may be a surprise, there is one sugar that dentists encourage their patients to eat because it helps prevent cavities. Unlike regular sugar, the natural sugar xylitol (found in some chewing gums, candies, mints and drink mixes) doesn't break down in the mouth to form acids. However, for the best cavity protection, you need to consume three to five servings of xylitol each day, according to Dr. Scott Cayouette of the American Academy of General Dentistry. Although xylitol is safe for you and your family, be sure to keep it away from your furry friends. Dogs cannot tolerate this sweetener, even in small amounts.

Knowing how nutrition and oral health are related can help you make smarter food choices that can lower your risk of developing cavities. When combined with regular brushing and flossing and routine dental exams, healthy eating can have a big impact on your oral health and overall wellness.



TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) Benefits for Newborns

Eligible family members may be voluntarily enrolled in the TDP at any time; however, due to enrollment processing timelines, TDP coverage for newborns does not take effect until an infant is one month old. Although most children do not need dental care until closer to their first birthday, some are born with conditions that require immediate dental care. The good news is that newborns under one month of age are eligible to receive TDP benefits.

What you need to do:

Newborns who require immediate care can receive covered dental services prior to reaching one month of age. If possible, contact United Concordia prior to your newborn receiving dental care and our customer service representatives will ensure the newborn is enrolled and the claim processed. If you were unable to contact United Concordia prior to your newborn receiving dental care, you should contact United Concordia as soon possible after the dental services were provided. If United Concordia receives a claim prior to your contact, the claim will be denied, but fear not! All you need to do is contact United Concordia and a customer service representative will retroactively enroll your newborn to the date services were initially provided. After enrollment is complete, the claim will be reprocessed for payment.

It is important to note that your newborn must stay enrolled in the TDP for a minimum of 12 months. If a family plan already exists, the newborn will be added to the plan with no change in monthly premium cost. If the enrollee has a single plan (one enrolled family member, not a National Guard or Reserve sponsor), it will be changed to a family plan and the monthly premium will be at the family rate. If a National Guard or Reserve sponsor is the only existing TDP contract, a second, single plan will be created for the newborn and the sponsor will be responsible for two single plan monthly premiums. Please visit www.uccitdp.com to review monthly premiums, locate contact information, view covered benefits and more.



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Check This Out...

If you have a newborn that needs dental care, please read the article found on **page 7**.

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TDP Maximums

MAXIMUM	AMOUNT
Annual Benefit Maximum	\$1,500 per enrollee
Orthodontic Lifetime Maximum	\$1,750 per enrollee
Dental Accident Coverage Annual Maximum	\$1,200 per enrollee

TRICARE DENTAL PROGRAM
RESOURCES
www.uccitdp.com

ENROLLMENT AND BILLING SERVICES
1-844-653-4061 (CONUS)

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

711 (TDD/TTY)

CLAIMS FILING

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

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