



HEALTH MATTERS

A PUBLICATION FOR TRICARE® BENEFICIARIES

The Dentist is In ...

Diabetes and Your Oral Health



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Did you know that November is National Diabetes Month? The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says more than 34 million Americans have diabetes, and one in five of them don't even know they have the disease. It's a stark reminder that raising awareness is crucial. Diabetes can cause issues throughout your body, including in your mouth. If left untreated, diabetes can affect your mouth's saliva production, which is a key defense against cavities and gum disease. Diabetes may also delay your body's ability to heal wounds—or even impact your taste buds.

Want to hear some encouraging news? You can take action to protect your health and help others do the same by spreading the word. Here are some tips from the American Dental Association (ADA) that you can use to manage your oral

health and help fight (or prevent) diabetes:

- See your dentist for regular checkups.
- Brush twice a day with a soft brush and clean between your teeth daily using dental floss or a water flosser.
- If you wear any type of denture, clean it each day.
- Control your blood sugar levels by exercising, eating a nutritious diet, and taking your diabetes-related medications as directed.
- Avoid smoking.

The TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) can help you get the care you need to keep your gums and teeth healthy. If you or an enrolled family member has a medical condition, like diabetes, the TDP Wellness Program is available to provide additional dental benefits at no cost to you. Be sure to visit www.uccitdp.com to learn more about your benefits or to find a dentist near you.

Remember, awareness is key to prevention. By spreading the word about diabetes, you can save someone's life. For more oral health tips from the ADA, visit www.ada.org. To learn more about diabetes, visit www.cdc.gov or www.diabetes.org.

Thank you,

COL Christensen Hsu



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ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS

Teledentistry: an Option for Dental Emergencies

The TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) offers teledentistry as a mode of treatment delivery so enrollees can receive an emergency dental diagnosis from any location. See page 2.

Bruxism Can Be Tough on Teeth

Apart from causing discomfort, bruxism can loosen dental work and damage teeth. See page 4.

TDP Offers Three Kinds of Cleanings

The TDP covers multiple types of cleanings for adults. Learn how a routine cleaning is different than a debridement or a deep cleaning. See page 4.

A Teledentistry Emergency Option

Dental emergencies can happen anywhere and at any time. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) began offering teledentistry as a mode of treatment delivery so enrollees can receive an emergency dental diagnosis from any location. Teledentistry can be particularly helpful if your local guidelines ask that you limit your travel during the pandemic.

If you're experiencing a dental emergency, the first thing you should do is contact your dentist. Your dentist will decide if the teledentistry option is better for you than an office visit. If you don't have a dentist, you can call United Concordia's dental emergency line at **1-800-858-0051**.* A United Concordia customer service representative can help you find a dentist near you who can assist.

If teledentistry is recommended, here's what to expect:

You and the dentist will stay in separate locations. The dental office will set up a two-way conversation with you through video conferencing or by phone. You can share a high-quality image of your mouth, gums, or teeth with your dentist through a digital phone or tablet. The dentist will evaluate your condition and advise what to do next.

The diagnosis and remedy might be handled over the phone. For example, a patient with a gum infection may need a prescription called into a pharmacy. In other cases, the dentist might advise dental treatment be performed in-person.

Your dentist will decide the best option for you. Your TDP benefit covers one limited oral evaluation (includes an emergency teledentistry exam) in a consecutive 12-month period.

Wondering what may be considered a dental emergency? The American Dental Association (ADA) has identified the symptoms that may require emergency care:

- Bleeding that doesn't stop
- Painful swelling in or around your mouth
- Pain in a tooth, teeth or jaw bone
- Gum infection with pain or swelling
- After surgery treatment (dressing change, stitch removal)
- Broken or knocked out tooth
- Denture adjustment for people receiving radiation or other treatment for cancer
- Snipping or adjusting wire of braces that hurts your cheek or gums
- Biopsy of abnormal tissue

* United Concordia's dental emergency line should only be used for dental emergencies. It's available from 6 p.m. Sunday to 10 p.m. Friday, Eastern Time (ET).

For more information from the ADA about dental emergencies: www.ada.org. ★

Dental Care During the Pandemic

If you've been to the dentist recently, you may have noticed that your dentist has implemented new measures to keep you safe from COVID-19. You may see face shields and different kinds of masks or personal protective equipment (PPE) being worn, patients waiting in their cars prior to the scheduled appointment time, and you're likely to have your temperature checked – again, for your safety.

If you haven't been to the dentist in a while, please know that dental offices are working diligently to catch up with patient dental needs that may have been delayed due to the pandemic. It's important that you're able to receive dental care under the TDP for your oral and overall wellness. If you need assistance with obtaining an appointment or finding a dentist, please call United Concordia:

- CONUS Toll Free: **1-844-653-4061**
- OCONUS Toll Free: **1-844-653-4060**. Find the AT&T [codes](#) on the TDP website (www.uccitdp.com) in the "Contact Us" section. ★



Follow the Thread to Oral Health

Flossing should be an important part of your daily routine.

Without flossing, you're missing at least two of each tooth's surfaces, even if you do brush twice a day. Proper flossing once a day can help remove food and plaque from your teeth in areas a toothbrush can't reach, like between your teeth and under your gum line.

Five easy steps:

1. Select the right dental floss. Your dentist can recommend the type of floss that's right for you.
2. Loosely wrap 18 inches of dental floss around your middle fingers until you have about 2 inches left between your fingers.
3. Hold floss firmly between your thumbs and index fingers. Gently slide the floss in a "C-shape" up and down between your teeth, working it beneath the gum line on both sides.
4. Move to a clean section of floss and repeat until you have cleaned around each tooth.
5. Rinse your mouth with water or an ADA-approved mouthwash. For a list of them, go to www.ada.org. ★



Visual Guide

Check out our instructional flossing video on the TDP website at www.uccitdp.com. Select the "Dental Health Center" tab and then the "Oral Health Tips, Treatments, and Videos" section on the page.

Helpful Online Resources

COVID-19

TRICARE's online COVID-19 resources include information about coronavirus testing, telemedicine, medications and prescriptions, answers to frequently asked questions, and a symptom checker. Find them here:

www.tricare.mil/coronavirus.

TDP Dental Health Center

The TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) Dental Health Center includes information about fillings, healthy dietary choices, what to do if you lose or crack a tooth, and the medical and dental health conditions that can impact the mouth, gums, and teeth.

You can find the link to the Center at the top of the TDP home page at www.uccitdp.com. The center offers information for families who want to know what to expect at the dentist's office.

You also can find details about who is eligible for TDP, network dentists, how to enroll, and your dental benefits at www.uccitdp.com. ★

TDP Offers Three Types of Cleanings

The TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) covers various cleanings for adults:

Routine Cleaning

A routine cleaning is the most common type of dental cleaning. It's performed when your gums and bone structure are healthy. Plaque, stains, and tartar (hardened plaque) are removed from your teeth by your dentist or dental hygienist. Areas of focus are on the inside of the lower-front teeth and on the outside of the upper-back teeth, where tartar builds up first. The TDP covers two of these types of cleanings in a consecutive 12-month period.

Debridement

If you have a heavy build-up of plaque and tartar on your teeth, you may need a dental debridement. A debridement usually requires extra time and skill to remove the build-up. You only need this if your dentist recommends it.

Deep Cleaning

A deep cleaning, or a scaling and root planing, is a combination of procedures to treat gum conditions and disease. Your dentist may recommend this if you have plaque and tartar that extends below the gum line. A deep cleaning may take more than one visit to complete, and may require a local anesthetic.

Visit www.uccitdp.com to obtain TDP coverage and cost-share information for these types of cleaning procedures. ★



Bruxism Can Be Tough on Teeth

What is bruxism? Bruxism is when a person grinds or tightly clenches his or her teeth without even being conscious of it. Bruxism can occur while awake or while sleeping.

Apart from causing discomfort, bruxism can eventually loosen dental work and damage teeth. It can also wear away tooth enamel, causing the underlying layer of the tooth to be exposed, resulting in tooth sensitivity to heat and cold.

Common symptoms of bruxism, according to the American Dental Association (ADA), are:

- Earache
- Headaches when you wake up
- Loose teeth
- Gum recession
- Neck pain
- Insomnia
- Sore jaw

Many cases of teeth-bruxism don't need treatment. But if you're consistently experiencing any of these symptoms, it might be time to see your dentist.

How is Bruxism Treated?

Your dentist may fit you with a custom mouth guard to help protect your teeth.

Your TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) benefit includes coverage for an occlusal guard that can help treat bruxism; however, the diagnosed symptom cannot be related to a temporomandibular joint disorder (TMD), which is considered a medical condition.

The TDP covers one occlusal guard for bruxism (50% cost-share) in a consecutive 12-month period for TDP enrollees who are age 13 or older.

To learn more about bruxism, go to www.mouthhealthy.org. ★



Holiday Candy: How Sweet It Isn't

The holidays are a season of giving, but special-occasion candy can be especially hazardous to your oral health due to its sugar content.

Here's why: Sugar aids in the production of plaque in your mouth—you know, that sticky white substance that clings to teeth. Plaque can lead to cavities and can even erode the protective enamel on your teeth.

You can reduce your risk of cavities and erosion of tooth enamel by brushing twice a day and flossing. A little knowledge about sweets can help you steer away from trouble.

Here are some helpful tips from the American Dental Association:

- Choose sugar-free candy to help reduce the plaque that can lead to cavities and erosion of tooth enamel.
- Choose dark chocolate over milk chocolate because the dark has less sugar.
- Think twice about candy canes, lollipops, jawbreakers, and other hard candy because sucking on hard candy

coats your teeth with its sugar for a longer period of time, and chewing them can risk cracking a tooth.

- Avoid gummy or sticky candy because it's harder to brush away, giving bacteria a longer time to work. And, yes, sticky candy like caramels, taffy or sours, can loosen existing dental work.
- Chew sugarless gum, as it stimulates the production of saliva, which rinses your mouth. Look for a sugar-free sweetener like xylitol, which is 100% natural and helps reduce plaque formation that can lead to cavities.
- Drink water because it can minimize some of the harmful effects of sugar to help prevent cavities. If you eat candy and can't brush immediately afterward, drink some water and swish it around in your mouth.

The best way to eat sweets is in moderation, followed by brushing, flossing, and rinsing.

For more details, visit www.mouthhealthy.org. ★

Lip Service

Take care of your lips, because healthy lips are part of your overall oral health. Your environment and the weather can play havoc with them. Your lips, after all, have a very thin outer layer and few oil-producing glands, which means they can dry out easily.

Wind and dirty air contribute to dryness, but nothing is worse for your lips than too much sun, according to the Skin Cancer Foundation. Prolonged sun exposure increases your risk of skin cancer and premature aging. So it's very important to protect and hydrate your lips (and that of your children) throughout the year.

In the Winter

The cold months can be almost as harsh as warmer ones. Keep lip balm on hand that includes a high sun protection factor (SPF). The SPF range is from 2 to 100, with 100 providing the most protection from the sun. Try not to lick your lips as saliva quickly evaporates, causing your lips to dry out more easily.

In the Summer

Apply a water-resistant lip balm throughout the day for maximum benefit. If your lips are extra dry and chapped, you can gently exfoliate them with a soft toothbrush.

Oh, and Don't Smoke

Everyone knows it's unhealthy. Smoking can also cause premature wrinkles around your lips. For more information, check out the Skin Cancer Foundation's blog at www.skincancer.org. ★

TDP Wellness Program Benefits

If you or an enrolled family member has been diagnosed with a specific chronic condition or is pregnant, the TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) Wellness Program is available to provide enhanced dental benefits at no cost to you.

Getting the proper treatment and maintenance for gum disease will have a positive effect on your overall wellness. Scientists continue to uncover connections between certain medical conditions and gum disease. The TDP Wellness Program is available for enrollees with the following medical conditions:

- Cerebral Vascular Disease (stroke)
- Coronary Artery Disease (heart)
- Diabetes
- Lupus
- Oral Cancer

- Organ Transplant
- Rheumatoid Arthritis
- Pregnancy

Confirm and Activate Your Coverage

To receive this enhanced coverage, you (or anyone on your dental plan) must report the covered condition via the My Account application on TDP's website: www.uccitdp.com.

Register your chronic condition any time after your TDP effective date of coverage. Here's how:

1. Select the red "Log in to My Account" button at the top of this page and log in using your DS Logon. (Don't worry if you don't have a DS Logon, you can register on this page.)

2. Select "Manage My Wellness."
3. Add your medical condition.

Take Advantage of Your Benefits

Once registered, talk to your dentist about your medical condition and your additional coverage through the TDP. You may or may not need the extra services that are available, but your dentist can recommend which (if any) additional procedures can help your oral health. ★





'Direct Bill' Enrollees Can Pay Premiums Online

Most TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) enrollees have their monthly premiums paid through a sponsor payroll deduction that's reflected on the monthly military Leave and Earnings Statement (LES). These TDP enrollees don't need to take any action to pay monthly TDP premiums. However, if you're a "direct bill" TDP enrollee who pays your monthly premium after receiving an email or paper monthly invoice, managing your TDP payments online is a snap.

Whether you're looking to make a single payment, set up automatic payments or track your billing, the TDP makes it easy. Simply follow these steps:

Make a Payment Online

1. Visit the TDP website at www.uccitdp.com.
2. Log on to your My Account using your DS Logon. (Don't worry if you don't have a DS Logon—you can register on this page.)
3. Select the Billing tab from the menu.

4. Select the blue Pay my Bill button.
5. Select Pay Now on the upper right-hand corner of the page.
6. Select a credit or debit card you have on file.
7. Select the blue Pay Invoice button to complete your secure transaction. That's it!

How to Set Up Automatic Monthly Payments

Set up your automatic payments by following these simple instructions :

1. Visit the TDP website at www.uccitdp.com.
2. Log in to your My Account using your DS Logon. As noted above, you can register for a DS Logon on this page.
3. Select the Billing tab from the menu.
4. Select the blue Pay My Bill button.

5. Select the Add Payment Method and fill out all of the required fields >select Add payment method >Back to Main Menu.
6. Select Add Recurring Payment Method.
7. Choose when you want payments to be withdrawn from your account and when you want automatic payments to begin.
8. Select any credit or debit card on file you would like to use for automatic payments.
9. Check the box once you understand the terms and conditions.
10. Select the blue Set Recurring box. You're done! ★



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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)

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