



HEALTH MATTERS

A PUBLICATION FOR TRICARE® BENEFICIARIES

The Dentist is In ... How to Fight Teeth Sensitivity



U.S. Air Force Col.
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Do you experience pain when you try hot or cold foods and drinks? According to the American Dental Association, teeth sensitivity occurs when the enamel on your teeth wears down and the more sensitive dentin becomes exposed. This allows heat and cold or acidic or sticky foods to reach the nerves and cells inside the tooth.

There are several possible causes of teeth sensitivity:

- Tooth decay (cavities)
- Broken or cracked teeth caused by a tooth injury
- Fillings that have become worn down and possibly require refilling

- Gum disease
- The gum line receding and pulling away from the tooth, exposing the root

To ease your teeth sensitivity, your dentist may suggest one of a variety of treatments:

- **Desensitizing toothpaste.** This toothpaste contains compounds that help block sensitivity in the tooth.
- **Fluoride gel.** Your dentist may apply a gel to strengthen tooth enamel and reduce sensitivity.
- **A crown, inlay, or bonding.** These may be used to correct a flaw or decay that results in sensitivity.
- **Surgical gum graft.** If gum tissue has been lost from the root, this will protect the root and reduce sensitivity.
- **Root canal.** If the sensitivity is severe, your dentist may recommend this treatment.

The TRICARE Dental Program covers two routine dental checkups in a consecutive 12-month period. If you have concerns about teeth sensitivity, be sure to bring them up with your dentist at your next checkup.

Thank you,

Col. Linda Coates



ISSUE 2 | 2022

ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS

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Having a baby? You'll have plenty of doctor appointments, but don't forget your preventive dental care.

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Treatments for Colds and Allergies Can Cause Dry Mouth

If you have a common cold or allergy that you're treating with a medication, be careful it doesn't lead to dry mouth. That can lead to increased plaque, tooth decay, and gum disease. See page 7.



Maintaining Oral Health is Part of Prenatal Care

Having a baby? You'll have plenty of doctor appointments, but don't forget about your dental appointments. Your oral health is essential to prenatal care.

Pregnancy can increase your risk of gum disease, which has been linked to early labor and underweight newborns. If you notice tender, swollen gums that bleed easily when brushing or flossing, you might have gum disease. Morning sickness can increase the amount of acid in your mouth, damaging tooth enamel. Pregnancy may also cause you to eat more carbohydrates or sweets than usual, and that promotes tooth decay, too.

Your dentist can help detect teeth or gum problems early and treat them effectively, sometimes with a simple cleaning.

The TRICARE Dental Program's (TDP) Wellness Program provides pregnant enrollees with an additional (third) dental cleaning to help prevent or treat issues like gum disease – at no additional cost when using a TDP network dentist. But you must enroll in the program to take advantage of the benefit.

Here's how to sign up:

1. Visit the TDP website at www.uccitdp.com.
2. Select the red "Log in to *My Account*" button at the top of the home page.
3. Log in using your DS Logon. If you don't have one, the website will walk you through the steps to get yours.
4. Select "Manage My Wellness."
5. Select "Add Your Medical Condition" and choose "Pregnancy" from the drop-down choices. ★

For more on the topic, download *Your Oral Health and Pregnancy* from the TDP Dental Health Center at www.uccitdp.com.

Dietary Choices for Oral Health

Good

Many of the foods and drinks physicians recommend for a healthy body also benefit your teeth and gums, according to the American Dental Association. They include:

Water

Water can rinse away potentially harmful sugar, acid, and food particles left behind from food and beverages. Water with fluoride can be especially beneficial to protect against cavities.

Dairy

Rich in calcium, vitamin D, and protein, dairy products can help your teeth stay strong. Choose options without added sugar, like cheese, milk, and plain yogurt.

Lean protein

Not only are they rich in bone-building protein, but poultry, eggs, and fish also contain phosphorus, which is a mineral that helps maximize the benefits of calcium.

Most fruits and vegetables

These healthy diet staples can act as natural teeth cleaners. The action of chewing them encourages saliva production, helping to rid your mouth of other harmful substances. *A note of caution: Despite their many benefits, some fruits and vegetables contain high levels of sugar and/or acid.*

Nuts

Nuts are rich in protein and typically low in plaque-causing carbohydrates. Be careful: Nuts with harder textures, such as whole almonds, have been known to break teeth.

Not So Good

Take caution and consider moderation when eating or drinking any of these. Drinking water and rinsing throughout the day can also help minimize their damage.

Citrus

Acidic citrus fruits, such as oranges and lemons, can erode tooth enamel and irritate mouth sores.

Coffee and tea

The caffeine in coffee and tea can lead to dry mouth, and both have high acid content. Frequent consumption may stain teeth.

Most flavored beverages

Sugar and acid-packed sodas aren't the only culprits. Even nutritious juices and sugar-free beverages can be high in acid.

Some bottled waters

Some bottled-water brands contain lower pH level than pure water. This means a higher acid content. Consider drinking tap water or choosing a brand with a higher pH. Look for a bottled water that has a pH that is within the EPA recommended range of 6.5 and 8.5.

Alcohol

Alcohol contributes to dehydration and dry mouth. Research shows that heavier drinkers can have more severe gum disease. Alcohol consumption has also been linked to oral cancer.

The Diabetes and Oral Health Connection

Thirty-four million people have diabetes in the United States, but one in four don't know it. It's important to know the signs and risks. While most people with diabetes know about associated dangers, they may know less about the connection between diabetes and oral health.

Individuals have many kinds of health care providers as part of their diabetes care teams. Their dentist should be on the team, too. Researchers have found that people with diabetes may also have:

- **Reduced saliva production:** Saliva is needed to clean bacteria from teeth and neutralize harmful acids in the mouth. Those acids can cause tooth decay.
- **Rapid bacteria growth:** When blood glucose (sugar) is increased, bad bacteria in the mouth feed off sugar in saliva.
- **Increased plaque development:** When bacteria combine with food particles and other substances, it can form the soft, sticky stuff on your teeth, called plaque. Plaque is one of the main causes of gum disease, according to the Cleveland Clinic (my.clevelandclinic.org).
- **Decreased ability to fight and resist infection:** With early gum problems, they may be red, swollen, or bleeding. If the condition worsens to periodontitis (severe gum disease), it can destroy the tissue and bone that hold the teeth in place.

Diabetics with gum disease may find that their blood sugar becomes harder

to control, and these high sugar levels can cause their gum disease to progress more rapidly.

It seems like a tough cycle to break, but there are strategies you can use to keep your mouth, teeth, and gums as healthy as possible. The Mayo Clinic and National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (www.niddk.nih.gov) offer these tips:

- Practice optimal oral hygiene, brushing twice and flossing once daily.
- If gum disease is detected early, it can be reversed or treated with either nonsurgical treatment, like scaling and root planing, or more advanced treatments.
- Keep your dentist up to date with your sugar levels. Your dentist and physician may need to collaborate to provide you with the best overall care.
- If you smoke, quit.
- Avoid sweets, which aren't good for your oral health or diabetes.
- Chew sugar-free gum or let sugarless lozenges dissolve slowly in your mouth to stimulate saliva.

TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) enrollees are covered for two routine dental exams, two routine dental cleanings, and two topical fluoride treatments in a consecutive 12-month period. If you register your diabetes with the TDP's Wellness Program, you can get more coverage for periodontal (gum) services at no additional cost to you.

Register your condition in five steps:

1. Visit the TDP website at www.uccitdp.com.
2. Select the red "Log in to *My Account*" button at the top of the home page.
3. Log in using your DS Logon. If you don't have one, the website will walk you through the steps to get yours.
4. Select "Manage My Wellness."
5. Select "Add Your Medical Condition" and choose "Diabetes" from the drop-down options.

That's all there is to it. Now you'll have access to additional periodontal maintenance at no additional cost. That includes:

- Periodontal (gum) maintenance – an additional service per year
- Scaling and root planing (deep cleaning)
- Periodontal (gum) surgery – four procedures for specific services

Visit your dentist regularly for cleanings and routine check-ups. ★

DIABETES

You may download *Your Oral Health & Diabetes*, a helpful fact sheet, from the TDP Dental Health Center at www.uccitdp.com. The center's fact sheets include information about heart disease, oral cancer, and other medical conditions linked to oral health.

Freshen Your Breath With These Quick Tips

Win the war against bad breath by maintaining your oral health.

The source of bad breath often is bacteria, which can be caused by a variety of conditions: gum disease, food, tobacco products, a medical condition, or dry mouth, which results from insufficient saliva.

You can fight bad breath by:

- Brushing your teeth for two minutes twice a day, with a soft-bristled brush
- Using a Waterpik type of water flosser
- Drinking water throughout the day
- Flossing to remove dental plaque from places that your toothbrush can't reach
- Avoiding sweets and other empty-calorie snacks that can result in tooth decay

If you're concerned about what's causing your bad breath, ask a dentist. CONUS and OCONUS enrollees may find nearby dentists at www.uccitdp.com/find-a-dentist/#/. TRICARE Dental Program enrollees are covered for two routine dental exams, two routine dental cleanings, and two topical fluoride treatments in a consecutive 12-month period.

Regular checkups allow a dentist to detect any problems, and treat them before they become more serious. ★

Online Resources

COVID-19

TRICARE's online resources on COVID-19 include information about symptoms, testing, boosters, and more. Find them at www.tricare.mil/coronavirus.

TRICARE Publications

If you have questions about your TRICARE Dental Program coverage, visit www.tricare.mil/publications or www.uccitdp.com. You can download the *TRICARE Dental Program Handbook* from either website. The handbook includes information about the annual maximum benefit, the appeals process, cost-shares, and more.

TRICARE Podcast

The "Get to Know TRICARE" podcast helps you learn more about your benefits. If you missed the "Keeping Your Mouth Healthy" episode, check it out. Go to <https://newsroom.tricare.mil/podcast>. ★



Update DEERS With the Changes in Your Life

Your TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) enrollment information must match the information in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS). If the information isn't the same, coverage may be delayed or denied. Always keep DEERS up to date, especially in these situations:

- A move to a new address
- Marriage
- Birth or adoption
- Divorce
- A child added before turning age 1
- A stepchild or court-ordered ward is newly eligible for the TDP
- Your retirement
- Loss of child's eligibility when he or she marries or turns 21, or 23 if certain conditions apply related to school enrollment and financial support.

Sponsors or registered family members may make address and contact information changes, but only the sponsor can add or delete family members within DEERS. The addition or deletion of family members requires proper documentation, such as a marriage certificate, divorce decree, or birth certificate,

and must be accomplished by the sponsor at an ID Card Office or through a copy of a notarized DEERS form that is provided to the DEERS office. You may update your DEERS information in one of the following ways:

1. **Online:** Log in to the milConnect website at <https://milconnect.dmdc.osd.mil>. This method is a quick and easy way to update address and contact information.
2. **In Person:** Visit a local personnel office that has an ID Card Office. To locate the nearest facility, visit <https://idco.dmdc.osd.mil/idco/>. Please call ahead for hours of operation and for detailed instructions.
3. **Phone:** Call the Defense Manpower Data Center Support Office at **1-800-538-9552**.
4. **Fax:** Fax changes to DEERS at 1-800-336-4416. The sponsor's Department of Defense Benefits Number and/or Social Security number must be included with the faxed documents.
5. **Mail:** Mail changes to:
Defense Manpower Data Center Support Office
Attn: COA
400 Gigling Road
Seaside, CA 93955-6771. ★





Treatments for Colds and Allergies Can Cause Dry Mouth

If you have a common cold or allergy that you're treating with a medication, be careful it doesn't lead to dry mouth. That can lead to increased plaque, tooth decay, and gum disease.

Nasal congestion and breathing through your mouth both reduce the natural flow of saliva. Some medications used to treat cold symptoms, such as antihistamines and decongestants, can decrease saliva even more, according to the Mayo Clinic (www.mayoclinic.org).

As with the other symptoms, the longer dry mouth goes without treatment, the worse it can become.

Dryness in the mouth and decreased saliva can:

- Quicken the growth of bacteria, increasing your risk of developing tooth decay, cavities, and gum disease.
- Make it more difficult to chew, swallow, and get your nutrients, which you need to feel better.
- Result in acute sinusitis. That's an infection with a virus that causes inflammation and pain around your sinus cavities.

Tips to keep the saliva flowing:

- Keep a water bottle nearby, and sip frequently to keep your mouth lubricated. It keeps you hydrated, too.
- Suck on sugar-free cough drops slowly, or chew sugarless gum to stimulate saliva flow. The Mayo Clinic recommends over-the-counter dry-mouth aids such as Biotene Oral Balance, Mouth Kote Dry Mouth Spray, or Oasis Moisturizing Mouth Spray.
- Take hot showers. The heat can help clear your nasal passages; the moisture helps with dryness.
- Keep a humidifier running in the room you're in most, to moisten the air. That can soothe a dry mouth and dry throat.
- Try a saline nasal spray, which can significantly reduce sinusitis symptoms.
- You might not feel up to it, but keep up with your brushing-flossing-rinsing routine to keep oral bacteria at bay. ★



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 TRICARE Dental Program
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CHECK THIS OUT...

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TRICARE Dental Program Premiums Change on May 1

The table below outlines the new TRICARE Dental Program premium rates, which begin on May 1, 2022. Premiums vary based on sponsor and member status.

Check out the *TRICARE Costs and Fees 2022 Fact Sheet* at www.tricare.mil/publications to learn more about premiums and other costs. ★

TRICARE Dental Program Monthly Premiums May 1, 2022 to April 30, 2023

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	\$11.94	\$31.04	N/A
Selected Reserve	\$11.94	\$29.84	\$77.59	\$89.53
Individual Ready Reserve	\$29.84	\$29.84	\$77.59	\$107.43

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

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