



HEALTH MATTERS

A PUBLICATION FOR TRICARE® BENEFICIARIES

The Dentist is in...

The Key To Preventive Dental Health? You!



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Most of us learned at an early age that brushing and flossing twice daily is an effective way to maintain a healthy mouth. Surveys show, however, that not all adults follow this advice. In fact, the American Dental Association (ADA) reports that only four of 10 Americans floss at least once a day—and 20 percent never floss at all.

Interdental cleaners like floss are a critical part of sound oral hygiene. Plaque between teeth can lead to gum disease or cavities. It is difficult for a toothbrush to reach the areas between teeth. Without regular flossing, plaque and food debris can accumulate and cause decay and disease.

When you brush, make sure to use a fluoride toothpaste and brush for two minutes, twice a day. Floss once a day, in the morning or evening, whichever you prefer. In addition to brushing and flossing, visit the dentist regularly.

The TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) covers yearly diagnostic and preventive services, giving you even more reasons to visit the dentist. During a 12-month period, the TDP covers two routine teeth cleanings. You can learn more about what preventive services are covered by downloading the *TRICARE Dental Program Handbook*.

Another key factor in preventive dental health is to minimize the amount of sugar in your diet. A steady stream of sugary foods and drinks can damage teeth. For up to 20 minutes after you eat or drink, bacteria in the mouth feed on sugar and produce acids that attack tooth enamel. This can lead to cavities, especially if you sip soda or sugary beverages all day.

Since childhood, we have all heard that how daily brushing and flossing is integral to the health of our mouths and bodies. Put that knowledge into action and develop consistent brushing and flossing routines. Paired with regular cleanings and exams and less sugar consumption, you will be on your way to fantastic oral hygiene. Your mouth will thank you!

Col. James Honey

Sources:

<https://www.ada.org/en/press-room/news-releases/2014-archive/september/pledge-to-promote-smaller-sizes-less-sugar>

<https://www.ada.org/en/publications/ada-news/2014-archive/october/survey-finds-shortcomings-in-oral-health-habits>

<https://www.ada.org/en/press-room/news-releases/2016-archive/august/statement-from-the-american-dental-association-about-interdental-cleaners>



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ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS

New TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) Premiums

See Page 2 and view the new premiums for the TDP enrollment period May 1, 2018 - April 30, 2019.

Tooth Decay: Four Bad Habits That Put You At Risk

Learn about the four habits that can put you at risk for tooth decay. See Page 3.

Diagnostic and Preventive Services Provided By the TRICARE Dental Program

Discover covered services and cost shares for Diagnostic and Preventive services rendered under the TDP. See Page 7.



New TDP Premiums Effective May 1, 2018

The following tables list your TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) monthly premiums for the 2018 benefit year (May 1, 2018–April 30, 2019). The new premium amounts will be deducted from your military pay account or billed directly to you. Visit the TDP website at www.uccitdp.com for information regarding payment options.

Sponsor's Military Status	
Active Duty	Monthly Premiums
Single Premium (one family member)	Family Premium
\$11.39	\$28.87

Sponsor's Military Status			
Selected Reserve	Monthly Premiums		
Sponsor-Only Premium	Single Premium (one family member excluding sponsor)	Family Premium (more than one family member, excluding sponsor)	Sponsor and Family Premium
\$11.39	\$28.48	\$74.05	\$85.44

Sponsor's Military Status			
Individual Ready Reserve	Monthly Premiums		
Sponsor-Only Premium	Single Premium (one family member excluding sponsor)	Family Premium (more than one family member, excluding sponsor)	Sponsor and Family Premium
\$28.48	\$28.48	\$74.05	\$102.53



Tooth Decay: Four Bad Habits That Put You at Risk

Did you know that nine in 10 adults over 20 years of age suffer from some form of tooth decay? While tooth decay is largely preventable, bad habits can put you at risk of developing cavities. To better protect your teeth, it's important to break these four bad habits.

1. Frequent Snacking

Snacking all day can be a problem for your teeth. When the sugar in the snacks combines with the bacteria in your mouth, acids are formed, and these acids eat away at your tooth enamel. Frequent snacking means that your teeth are exposed to these acids more often, and this can lead to tooth decay.

Surprisingly, frequent healthy snacks can lead to cavities, too. Fruits are very nutritious, but they often have a high sugar content. Some vegetables, like carrots, also contain high sugar levels.

To better protect your teeth, try to limit snacking so that your teeth are exposed to acids less frequently. After enjoying a snack, rinse your mouth with water or brush your teeth.

2. Sipping on Sodas

If you like to sip on a can of soda throughout your work day, you may be putting yourself at risk of cavities. Like snacks, soda contains sugar, which leads to acid attacks inside your mouth. Even sugar-free sodas are acidic, and their acids can weaken your enamel. Sipping for extended periods keeps these acids in prolonged contact with your teeth, which is damaging.

If you want to drink a can of soda, try to drink the whole can in one sitting instead of consuming it for extended periods. Drink with a straw to keep the sugars and acids away from your teeth, and once you're finished, rinse your mouth with water. Rinsing your mouth helps to moderate the acids and sugars.

3. Poor Brushing Technique

When you're rushing around in the morning, it's easy to break routine and you can be forced to sacrifice the way you brush your teeth. Brushing your teeth properly takes two to three minutes, and if you rush, you could neglect some of your tooth surfaces. If you don't reach all areas with your toothbrush, bacteria, plaque and food particles can be left behind, and you could develop cavities.

To protect your teeth, try to avoid rushing through your tooth-brushing routine. Slow down and focus on cleaning all your tooth surfaces. It's important to clean the outer and inner surfaces, as well as the chewing surfaces of every tooth.

4. Not Seeing a Dentist

If you don't see your dentist regularly, you can increase your risk of developing cavities and gum disease. While foregoing dental visits is very common, it's a bad habit with unfavorable consequences. Not going to the dentist means that you miss out on preventive services like professional cleanings, sealants or fluoride treatments.

Cost is one of the top reasons for skipping dental visits. Fortunately, the TDP covers two cleanings and up to three exams within a 12-month period. Please note, the third exam and/or cleaning must be performed by a different provider.

Cavities are very common, but fortunately, they're largely preventable. To ensure a healthy mouth, try to break the bad habits that put you at risk of developing tooth decay.





Why Healthy Gums Are Important To Your Overall Wellness

Healthy Gums and Your Body

If your gums are healthy, you're at a reduced risk of developing common chronic diseases. According to Harvard Health publications, if your gums are healthy, you're less likely to suffer from diabetes, cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory disease, dementia and pregnancy complications.

It's unclear why gum disease is linked to other chronic conditions, but researchers believe the inflammation that bacteria cause when they invade the gums may be a key factor. Inflammation destroys gum tissue and the bony structure that supports teeth, eventually resulting in tooth loss. Inflammation is also an element in many chronic diseases. The upside is that improving gum health can also improve chronic disease symptoms. For example, research suggests that treating gum disease may lessen the severity of diabetes.

What Do Healthy Gums Look Like?

Most people experience the symptoms of gum disease at some time in their lives. Healthy gums are pink and firm, and they don't bleed. Diseased gums may be red, swollen, tender or bleeding, and you may have bad breath or a bad taste in your mouth, and it may be painful to chew, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Other symptoms of gum disease include sensitive or loose teeth, gums that don't adhere to your teeth and a mismatched bite or ill-fitting dentures.

How to Prevent Gum Disease

If your gums are healthy, you're one of the lucky ones—only one in four adults over the age of 35 have healthy gums. But there are simple, effective steps you can take to improve and maintain your gum health.

- **Brushing and flossing:** When you brush your teeth, brush your gums as well using a gentle, circular motion, and floss between your teeth once a day. Don't brush too hard or use a hard-bristled toothbrush because this can make your gums recede.
- **Mouthwash:** The American Dental Association recommends using a therapeutic mouthwash to prevent or reduce mild symptoms of gum disease.
- **Dental visits:** See your dentist for a checkup every six months. Treating gum disease in its early stages prevents it from spreading and causing severe and permanent damage to your teeth.
- **Diet:** A recent study suggests that a diet high in the omega-3 fatty acids found in fatty fish may reduce your risk of gum disease. Fruits, vegetables and vegetable oils, nuts and legumes are also good for healthy gums.

Looking after your oral health means caring for your gums as well as your teeth. When your gums are healthy, you reduce your risk of developing bad breath, dental decay and a whole range of harmful diseases. Brush, floss, use a mouthwash, visit your dentist regularly and eat healthily to reap the benefits of disease-free gums.

Seven Food and Drink Culprits Behind Discolored Teeth

Did you know that certain foods and drinks can leave behind stained, discolored teeth? Although not all foods and drinks will leave you with stained teeth, many of them will. Below is a list of seven foods and drinks that can increase your risks of stained, discolored teeth.

1. Coffee & Tea

Coffee and tea are common culprits that can lead to stained and discolored teeth. As the National Library of Medicine National Institute of Health points out, the combination of the acid and colors in coffee and tea can wear down the enamel of your teeth and eventually stain them. Tea can actually stain your teeth more than coffee, according to a 2014 study published in the European Journal of Dentistry.

2. Red Wine

Like tea, red wine is also acidic and contains colors—so you may want to limit consumption to keep your pearly whites clean and bright. In fact, after a session of teeth whitening, the European Journal of Dentistry suggests avoiding red wine, tea and cola. And before you opt for white wine instead, you should know it can also stain your teeth.

3. Cola

Acidic and dark in color, cola is another culprit of stained teeth, according to the Cleveland Clinic. Since soda isn't a healthy choice nutritionally, there are numerous reasons to avoid it. These drinks are loaded with sugar and calories but contain few (if any) beneficial nutrients. By giving up cola, your teeth and waistline will thank you.

4. Sports Drinks

The rich color of many sports drinks can also cause stains on teeth—not to mention that they're also a source of added sugar. To help avoid tooth discoloration caused by sports drinks (and reduce your overall sugar intake), choose reduced-sugar sports drinks that are light (preferably white or clear) in color.

5. Certain Fruits & Veggies

Certain acidic fruits and veggies, especially those dark in color, are also sources of tooth discoloration. Tufts University notes that the fruits and veggies to steer clear of in order to avoid discolored teeth include beets, berries, pickles and fruit juices.

6. Colorful Sweets

You probably already know that the added sugar in sweets is bad for your teeth. However, what you may not realize is that certain brightly colored candies, ice pops and chocolates can cause tooth discoloration. That's just one more reason to steer clear of sweets in your regular diet.

7. Some Seasonings & Condiments

There are a few condiments and seasonings to shy away from when you want to avoid stained teeth, says Tufts University. These include curry, soy sauce and tomato sauce. Due to its strong acidity and deep color, balsamic vinegar is also a culprit when it comes to discolored teeth.



Diagnostic and Preventive Services

Maintaining good oral wellness goes far beyond brushing your teeth. Visiting a dentist at least twice a year can help identify and/or prevent cavities, gum disease and oral cancer. Your dentist may offer to provide certain diagnostic and preventive services such as oral exams, periodontal evaluations, teeth cleanings, topical fluoride treatments and other various services to detect/prevent dental abnormalities. See below for a breakdown of diagnostic and preventive services covered under the TDP.

Diagnostic Services

When it comes to oral wellness, early detection is crucial. That is why diagnostic services are integral to achieving a healthy mouth. These services allow dentists to carefully examine the inside of the mouth and diagnose any/all dental issues ranging from cavities, gum disease, oral cancer and many other dental abnormalities.

The TDP covers a range of diagnostic services, such as certain oral evaluations, periodontal evaluations and X-ray films. Most patients get routine oral evaluations. However, you can get a comprehensive evaluation, which is more detailed and takes more time, if any of the following apply:

- You're a new patient
- You haven't had a recent oral evaluation in the past from the same office
- You've experienced a significant health change or an unusual circumstance warrants an exception

Note: TDP participating dentists can't charge you for X-rays that aren't covered or performed for diagnostic purposes.

Preventive Services

Preventive and diagnostic services are designed to work hand-in-hand to protect your mouth. However, preventive services typically involve a procedure such as a teeth cleaning which protects the mouth from harmful bacteria that could potentially lead to cavities and/or gum disease. Choosing the right dentist and utilizing preventive services is the first step in achieving a healthy smile.

The TDP covers certain preventive services such as teeth cleanings, fluoride treatments, space maintainers and space maintainer care. Space maintainers for posterior teeth for patients under age 19 are fully covered.



HEALTH MATTERS

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Are healthy gums
important for your
overall wellness?
Read **Page 5** to
find out.

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Preventive and Diagnostic Covered Services

Your Cost-Share

Covered Services	CONUS Service Area		OCONUS Service Area
	Pay Grades E-1 - E-4	Pay Grades E-5 and Above	
Diagnostic <ul style="list-style-type: none">Exams - 2 in a consecutive 12-month period by same provider. Additional exam covered by different providerPeriodontal evaluation - 1 in a consecutive 12-month period, per officeFull mouth x-ray (complete series or panoramic x-ray) - 1 in 36 monthsBitewing X-rays - 1 in a consecutive 12-month period	0%	0%	0%
Preventive <ul style="list-style-type: none">Cleanings - 2 in a consecutive 12-month period. 3rd cleaning is allowed for pregnant patients and patients diagnosed with diabetes, coronary artery disease (heart), cerebral vascular disease (stroke), rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, oral cancer and recipients of an organ transplant.Topical fluoride treatments - 2 in a consecutive 12-month periodSpace maintainers under age 19	0%	0%	0%

TRICARE DENTAL PROGRAM
RESOURCES
www.uccitdp.com

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

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