TRICARE®

HEALTH MATTERS

A PUBLICATION FOR TRICARE® BENEFICIARIES

The Dentist is In ...

Spring Forward with a Healthy Smile

COL Christensen Hsu
Chief, TRICARE Dental Care Section
Defense Health Agency

Spring is in the air. If you're like many people, that means it's time to get outdoors, see the cherry blossoms, and of course, knock out some spring cleaning around the house. Remember to take care of your other spring cleaning, too—the one that involves your teeth. If you haven't seen your dentist recently, now may be the time to do so. The American Dental Association (ADA) recommends seeing your dentist twice a year. These checkups are important because they can help prevent oral health problems and treat existing symptoms you may have before they become more serious. The TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) covers these checkups (dental exams), cleanings, fluoride treatments, and other dental services you may need. Read further to learn more about your benefits and coverage.

Your TDP plan covers a wide range of dental services to help you keep your gums and teeth healthy. It includes coverage for:

- Two dental exams by the same provider in a consecutive 12-month period (a third exam by a different provider is covered).
- Two routine dental cleanings in a consecutive 12-month period.
- Two topical fluoride treatments in a consecutive 12-month period.
- Space maintainers for those under age 19.
- Sealants on permanent molars until age 19.

The TDP also provides other benefits, like coverage for implant services, X-rays, and more. If you have a chronic medical condition, you qualify for additional dental services through the TDP Wellness Program to treat periodontal (gum) disease, if needed. And if you're pregnant, you're automatically eligible for an additional (third) dental cleaning with the TDP Wellness Program. Remember, you must register your medical condition and/or pregnancy online using TDP's *My Account* to be eligible for these benefits. Visit **www.uccitdp.com** to learn more.

As you make your dental cleaning a priority this spring, don't forget to practice the oral hygiene essentials. Brush your teeth twice a day, floss between your teeth regularly, and eat a nutritious diet. Doing so will help you keep a healthy smile.

For more oral health tips from the ADA, visit **www.ada.org.** To find a dentist near you, visit **www.uccitdp.com.**

Thank you,

COL Christensen Hsu

ISSUE 2 | 2021

ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS

How Heart and Gum Disease Are Linked

People with gum disease have a greater risk of having a heart attack, stroke, or other serious cardiovascular issues. Learn why. **See page 4.**

Your Dentist Can Help You Maximize Your Oral Health

Regular visits to the dentist can do more than keep your teeth looking good — though it does that, too. **See page 5.**

Cost Estimator Removes Guesswork from Procedure Costs

Your online *My Account* application includes a handy Cost Estimator for the dental procedures you're considering. **See page 6.**

An Important Note About TRICARE Program Information: *At the time of publication, this information is current. It is important to remember that TRICARE policies and benefits are governed by public law and federal regulations. Changes to TRICARE programs are continually made as public law and/or federal regulations are amended. For the most recent information, contact the TRICARE Dental Program contractor.*

TDP Wellness Program Benefits

If you or a family member who is enrolled in the TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) has been diagnosed with a chronic medical condition, you qualify for additional dental services to treat periodontal (gum) disease, if needed. And they come at no cost to you.

Getting the proper dental treatment and maintenance for gum disease will have a positive effect on your overall wellness as scientists continue to uncover connections between certain chronic conditions and gum disease.

The TDP Wellness Program is for enrollees with the following chronic medical conditions:

- Cerebral Vascular Disease (stroke)
- Coronary Artery Disease (heart)
- Diabetes
- Lupus
- Oral Cancer
- Organ Transplant
- Rheumatoid Arthritis

Enrollees who are pregnant are automatically eligible for an additional (third) dental cleaning with the TDP Wellness Program.

Register your condition and activate your coverage

To receive the program's enhanced coverage, you must report the covered condition using the TDP's *My Account* page online. You can register to use the TDP Wellness Program any time after the date your TDP coverage goes into effect.

Here's how to get started:

- Select the red "Log in to My Account" button at the top of the web page at **www.uccitdp.com** and log in using your DS Logon*
- Select "Manage My Wellness"
- Add your medical condition

Take advantage of your benefits

Once you're registered, talk to your dentist about your medical condition and your additional TDP benefits. You may or may not need these extra services. But your dentist can recommend which (if any) additional procedures can help the condition of your mouth.

* Logging in to My Account requires a Level 2 DS Logon, provided by the government, to access your information. Obtaining a DS Logon (or upgrading your Level 1 DS Logon) is quick and easy. Just follow these steps:

1. Select "Log in to My Account" from the TDP home page.
2. Next, select "More DS Logon Options."
3. Finally, select the appropriate option ("Need a DS Logon?" or "Upgrade My DS Logon") from the drop-down.

When you have your Level 2 DS Logon, you're ready to log in and access the unique features in the *My Account* application. ★

Getting the Dental Health Facts

United Concordia has oral health fact sheets just for you. They feature tips and preventive care advice to help you maximize your oral health. These free downloads offer focused wellness advice that show the connections between your oral and overall health. Some of the topics include details about your oral health and diabetes, lupus, oral cancer, pregnancy, and heart disease. You can also find oral health advice for infants and teens, and children with special needs.

Visit the TDP Dental Health Center (**www.uccitdp.com**) to find a fact sheet of your choice.

Healthy Eating for Healthy Smiles

Good nutrition doesn't just benefit your body—it can help keep your teeth and gums healthy, too. That's because your mouth is the initial point of contact for everything you consume. Poor eating habits can lead to gum disease and tooth decay, while smart food choices can create healthier smiles. (For more on gum disease, see **page 4**.) Some tips on healthy eating:

Choose nutritious foods: The next time you find yourself craving chips or cookies, reach for something nutritious instead. Fruit, veggies, yogurt, and cheese contain calcium and other nutrients that help strengthen teeth and protect them from decay.

Skip the soda: Soft drinks and other sweet beverages coat the teeth with sugar, which promotes cavities. Water helps to neutralize acid and rinse away food particles, protecting your teeth from decay. It also hydrates the rest of your body.

If you must eat sweets, do it in moderation: Hard candy can damage enamel and leave your teeth vulnerable to fractures and chips. Sticky pastries, other sweets, and even dried fruit can lodge in your tooth crevices and loosen dental work. All contain sugar, which can lead to cavities.

If you do indulge in sweets, do so right after a meal. This is when your mouth produces extra saliva that breaks down harmful acids and helps rinse away sugar.

Don't chew ice: Chewing ice can cause fractures, cracks, and chips, which can make teeth more sensitive and lead to further damage. It can also hurt existing dental work. If you have to chew, choose sugar-free gum.

Limit alcohol consumption: Excessive drinking can reduce saliva flow. This can lead to dehydration and dry mouth. When that happens, you become vulnerable to tooth decay, gum disease, and mouth cancer.

Oral wellness isn't just about how you take care of your mouth, it's also about what you put in it. Healthy eating habits and good oral care keep you healthy in many ways. ★

Helpful Online Resources

Dental Health Center

The TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) Dental Health Center offers information for families who want to know what to expect at the dentist's office.

When you visit the Dental Health Center, you'll find new oral health fact sheets, which feature preventive dental care advice. Some of the topics addressed include oral health and diabetes, lupus, oral cancer, pregnancy, and heart disease. You'll also find oral health tips for infants, teens, and children with special needs. You can find the link to the center at the top of the TDP home page at **www.uccitdp.com**.

Find a Dentist

Need help finding a United Concordia TDP network dentist? You can find a general dentist or specialist through United Concordia's Find a Dentist tool: **www.uccitdp.com.**

COVID-19

TRICARE's online COVID-19 resources include information about vaccines, testing, telemedicine, and more. Find them here: **www.tricare.mil/coronavirus.**

TRICARE Publications

Last, but not least, if you have questions about your TDP coverage, don't forget to visit **www.tricare.mil/publications.** There, you can the download the *TRICARE Dental Program Handbook* and learn more about your dental coverage. ★

How Heart and Gum Disease Are Linked

Did you know that gum disease could increase your risk for heart disease? As reported in the **Harvard Heart Letter**, a newsletter of Harvard Medical School, those with gum disease could be up to three times the risk of having a heart attack, stroke, or other serious cardiovascular issues.

What's the connection between these seemingly separate issues? It's inflammation. The connection between gum disease and inflammation is so compelling that dentists and doctors say it's yet another reason to prevent gum disease.

That starts with brushing your teeth twice daily and flossing at least once daily. Doing so can prevent and often reverse the early stage of gum disease, known as gingivitis.

Individuals with heart disease and certain other conditions qualify for the TDP Wellness Program benefits, at no extra cost. For details, see page 2. ★

Periodontal Disease and How It Can Be Treated

Periodontal disease is an inflammatory gum disease that impacts the soft and hard structures that hold your teeth in place. It can also cause bleeding gums and bad breath. In the early stage of periodontal disease, called gingivitis, the gums become swollen and red due to inflammation. This is your body's natural response to the disease.

A more serious form of periodontal disease is periodontitis. At this stage, your gums pull away from your teeth, and your supporting gum tissues are damaged. This may lead to bone loss, loose teeth, and may eventually cause your teeth to fall out.

Chronic periodontitis is the most advanced form of the disease. It progresses relatively slowly and is typically more evident in adulthood. Important risk factors for periodontal disease include: smoking, lack of adequate home care, age, diet, health history, and medications.

Research suggests that periodontal disease is connected to a variety of other chronic diseases, including heart disease, diabetes, and rheumatoid arthritis. Scientists believe that inflammation may be the basis for the link between these diseases.

Treatment options

Dentists offer a wide range of treatments for the disease, such as scaling and root planing (in which the surface of the tooth's root is cleaned) or root surface debridement (the careful removal of plaque and tartar from the root surface). Dentists can also treat patients using a range of surgical procedures, when necessary.

Regularly scheduled visits with a dentist or periodontist are crucial to maintaining the health of your teeth and gums. The TDP covers two routine exams and cleanings in a consecutive 12-month period. Regular check-ups are an important part of treatment, so don't delay. ★

Your Dentist Can Help You Maximize Your Oral Health

Regular visits to the dentist can do more than keep your teeth looking good — though it can do that, too. By getting the proper preventive dental care, you can stay ahead of gum issues before they become expensive and difficult to treat — or avoid those issues all together, according to **MouthHealthy.org.**

By visiting your dentist regularly, you can:

Prevent cavities

Cavity-causing plaque is removed.

Keep your teeth intact

Prevent, identify, and treat common oral health problems before tooth loss occurs.

Boost whole-body health

Oral health is connected to overall health. Many medical concerns can be detected through the mouth.

Enjoy fresh breath

Odor-causing old food and debris are cleared away.

Look your best

Some stains on your teeth can be cleaned up and polished away.

Get more than 'just a cleaning'

A dental exam can include:

- X-rays
- Treatment-plan suggestions
- Gum disease evaluation
- Review of past dental work
- Medical and dental history review

Schedule routine exams

Personalized oral care is a necessity for good dental health. Be sure to visit your dentist regularly to ensure your mouth is as healthy as it can be.

The TDP covers two routine exams and cleanings in a consecutive 12-month period. ★

Why TDP Recommends Network Providers

A network dentist has signed a contractual agreement with United Concordia. This means they follow the TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) rules for providing care and accepting United Concordia's negotiated fees as payment in full for covered services. And you'll only pay the applicable cost-share for covered services.

While you can still receive care from any licensed dentist, your out-of-pocket costs could be higher when you see non-network dentists. That's because 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 you money: Network dentists can help you save on the cost difference between United Concordia's negotiated fees and the dentists' regular charges. This allows you to get the most out of your dental coverage. When you pay less for care, using a network dentist, you can get more covered services before reaching your $1,500 annual maximum.

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

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

Use the Find a Dentist tool on **www.uccitdp.com** to locate a dentist near you. You can search by specialty, county, ZIP code, street address, dentist, and/or practice name. ★

Cost Estimator Removes the Guesswork

Your online *My Account* dental application, found at **www.uccitdp.com**, gives you fast access to the information you need. You can find claims information, your and your family's dental procedure history, and other helpful features.

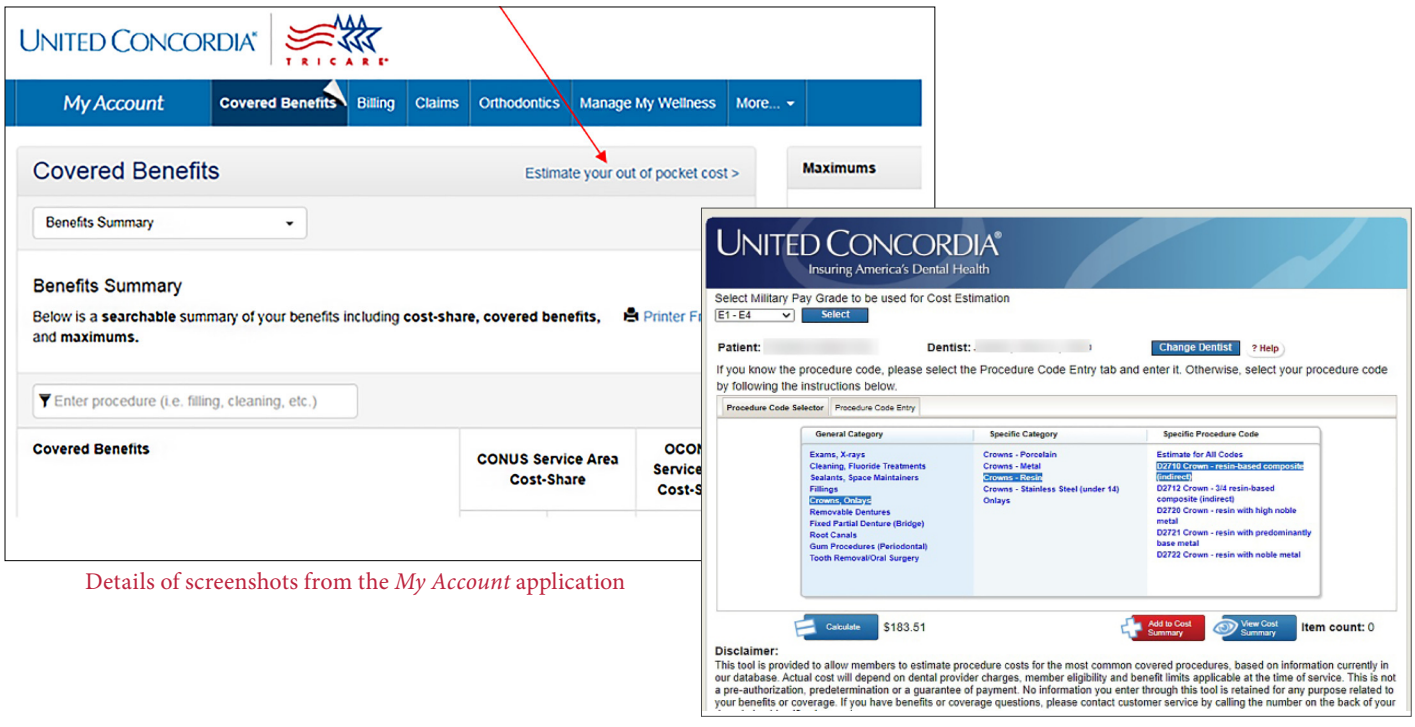
One of those useful features is the **Cost Estimator.** Here's how it works:

- Select "Covered Benefits" to open the Cost Estimator link (see below). On the web page that follows, enter your information and ZIP code. Then select "Show Dentists in My Area."
- A new page will open that includes a list of network dentists. Choose a provider from the returned list and select "Next." The general categories will appear. Select one (for example, "Root Canal").
- Next, select "Specific Category." For example, select "Adult Teeth (Bicuspid)" and select the Specific Procedure Code given to you by your provider. Once you select an item in all three columns, the "Calculate" button will appear.
- Select "Calculate." The estimated cost will appear.
- Do you have any other items to estimate? Select "Add to Cost Summary." That's it! ★

* **Logging in to *My Account*** requires a Level 2 DS Logon, which is managed by the Defense Manpower Data Center. Obtaining a DS Logon (or upgrading your Level 1 DS Logon) is quick and easy.

- Select "Log in to My Account" from the TRICARE Dental Program home page (**www.uccitdp.com**).
- Next, select "More DS Logon Options."
- Finally, select the appropriate option ("Need a DS Logon?" or "Upgrade My DS Logon") from the drop-down.

When you have your Level 2 DS Logon, you're ready to log in to gain access to the Cost Estimator and other features within *My Account*.



Details of screenshots from the *My Account* application

‘Distance’ Your Toothbrushes — and Other Tips

The pandemic reminded many of us about the value of reducing the risks of catching or spreading germs, even at home. Tips to keep in mind:

‘Dental distancing’ begins at home

Store your toothbrush safely. Avoid side-by-side storage along with the brushes of the other members of your household. After using yours, disinfect the handle.

Wash your hands before and after brushing or flossing

Washing hands can keep you healthy and prevent the spread of infections from one person to the next. The **Centers for Disease Control** recommends washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

Avoid touching your mouth (eyes and nose, too)

Germs can be picked up by our hands and enter the body through mucous membranes in your eyes, nose, and mouth, which is a gateway to your throat and lungs.

Don’t share toothbrushes, cups, other utensils

Toothbrushes and other utensils we put in our mouths can have germs on them even after being visibly rinsed clean.

Toss your toothbrush when you get sick

The **American Dental Association** recommends replacing your toothbrush so you don’t risk getting sick again. Routinely replace it every three to four months, or sooner if the bristles look worn.

Share a smile — for yourself and others

Psychological Science reports that smiling, even when you don’t feel like it, can help improve your mood, lower your heart rate, and help your body deal better with stress. ★

HEALTH MATTERS

United Concordia Companies, Inc.
TRICARE Dental Program
P.O. Box 69450
Harrisburg, PA 17106

Presorted
Standard
U.S. Postage
PAID

TRICARE is a registered trademark of the Department of Defense, Defense Health Agency. All rights reserved.

CHECK THIS OUT...

Periodontal Disease and How It Can Be Treated

Periodontal (gum) disease is linked to other chronic medical conditions, including heart disease, diabetes, and rheumatoid arthritis. Dentists offer a range of treatments for the disease. **See page 4.**

Brush Up on Oral Health

Brushing twice per day, two minutes each time, with fluoride toothpaste and flossing daily are great ways to keep your mouth healthy.

To learn more about oral health, and your TRICARE Dental Program benefits, visit **www.uccitdp.com.**

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