



HEALTH MATTERS

A PUBLICATION FOR TRICARE® BENEFICIARIES

The Dentist is In ...

The Risk of Smoking to Oral Health



COL. James Honey
Chief, TRICARE Dental Care
Section
Defense Health Agency

Using tobacco products is harmful to your oral and overall health. Smoking or chewing tobacco can significantly increase your chances for unhealthy oral conditions such as gum disease and oral cancer. Tobacco use in any form — cigarettes, pipes, and chewing tobacco — raises your risk for developing these conditions.

The American Dental Association reports additional oral problems caused by tobacco use include stained teeth and tongue, dulled sense of taste and smell, delayed healing after dental surgery, and tooth loss — a byproduct of gum disease.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, more than 20 million Americans have died because of smoking since the Surgeon General issued the first *Report on Smoking and Health* in 1964. Smoking weakens your immune system, which makes it harder to fight gum infection.

Finding a method to quit is the only way to decrease your risk of tobacco-related health problems. Because nicotine, which is found in tobacco products, is addictive, it makes it harder for smokers to quit. Have a plan of action and a support system to help you on your journey to quitting. Doing an activity in the place of smoking can help you quit. See your dentist or doctor if you believe you need medication to help you along the way.

For TRICARE Dental Program beneficiaries also enrolled in a TRICARE health plan, TRICARE provides services to help you in your journey to quitting. Learn more at www.tricare.mil/tobaccocessation.

Lastly, on a personal note, this is my final message to you as I'm retiring. But I leave you in capable hands. In parting, I urge you to keep your oral health a priority for a smile that will shine for years to come!

Thank you,
COL. James Honey



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ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS

Gum Disease Prevention: Treatment Helps Your Overall Health

Your oral health and body health are connected at their cores. Learn how gum disease can impact other health conditions. **See page 2.**

Healthy Eating Optimizes Oral Health

Nutritional foods play a key role in your dental health. **See page 4.**

A Guide to Using TDP's Cost Estimator in My Account

My Account, on www.uccitdp.com, has a Cost Estimator to help TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) enrollees plan their dental care. **See page 4.**

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.

Everything You Want to Know About Fillings

Dental fillings restore a damaged tooth to its normal function and can repair cosmetic problems. During a filling procedure, the decayed part of the tooth is removed, the area is cleaned, and the dentist fills the tooth with a hard substance.

Reasons you might need a filling:

- Cavity
- Broken tooth
- Teeth-grinding (bruxism)

How a dentist determines it's time for a filling:

- **Visual exam:** If your teeth are discolored or have obvious problems, your dentist may be able to find cavities simply by looking at your teeth or using dental instruments.
- **X-rays:** X-rays can detect decay and may help your dentist see cavities that can't be observed through other methods.

Popular types of tooth-filling material:

- **Amalgam:** This is a metal-based dental filling, and is the most researched, tested, and widely used dental-filling material. According to the American Dental Association, it's the "strongest and most durable direct restoration for large load-bearing restoration on posterior teeth."
- **Composite:** This is a resin-based dental filling that is tooth-colored.

Amalgams and composites are covered benefits under the TRICARE Dental Program (TDP). It's up to you and your dentist to determine which is the best fit for you. ★



Gum Disease Prevention: Treatment Helps Your Overall Health

Research shows the connections between good oral health and overall well-being.

Understanding how oral health impacts overall health has changed the way dentists and physicians view and treat many dental conditions, especially gum disease. Gum disease can contribute to other chronic health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, and respiratory disease.

For military members, gum disease also can impact dental readiness and military members' deployment status.

The connection between the mouth and one's overall health can be subtle and surprising. Chronic mouth conditions, for example, can damage one's self-esteem, interfere with social interactions, and even result in lost productivity, stress, and depression.

Understanding gum disease and inflammation in the mouth is a good way to understand the link between oral health and overall health.

Inflammation is an underlying problem in many diseases, including heart disease and rheumatoid arthritis. Studies show that people with gum disease are more likely to have poor heart health and an increased risk for heart attacks, diabetes, and rheumatoid arthritis.

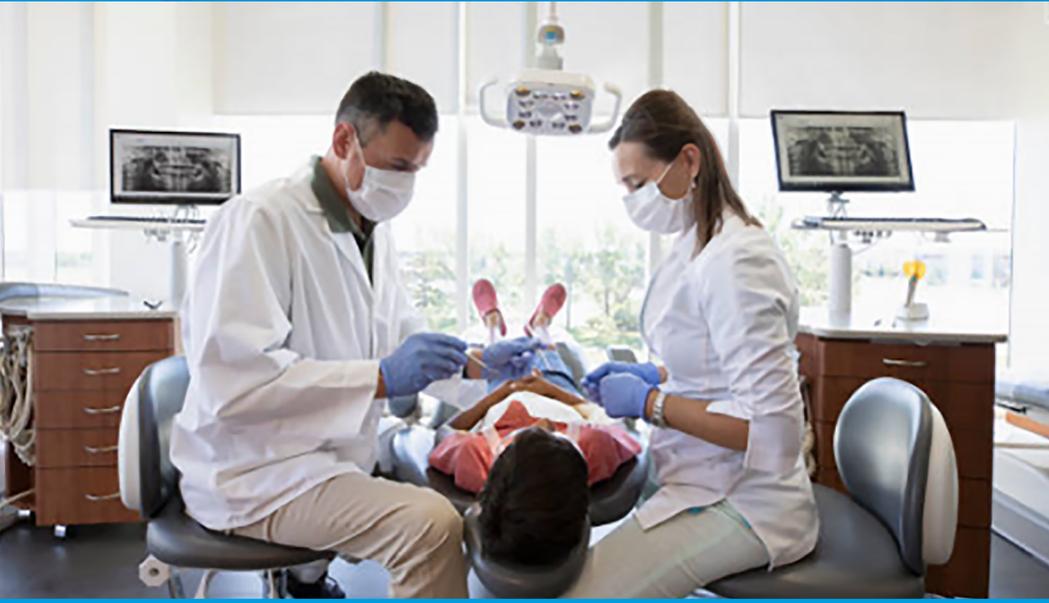
Inflammation Can Follow a Dangerous Path

Bacteria from gum disease can enter the bloodstream, where it can cause inflammation and injure major organs.

The disease reveals itself in one of two ways:

- **Gingivitis:** A mild form of gum disease, marked by red, swollen, and/or bleeding gums.

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Watch for These Gum Disease Symptoms

In its early stages, gum disease might go unnoticed, so it's a good idea to schedule periodic visits with your dentist. Your dentist will spot any symptoms that you might miss.

Symptoms can include:

- Persistent bad breath
- Red, swollen, or tender gums
- Gums that bleed easily
- Pain or trouble chewing
- Tooth sensitivity
- Receding gums
- Loose teeth

Individualized dental care can turn the tables on gum disease. If the gum disease has progressed, your dentist might recommend a deep cleaning, also known as scaling and root planing, or surgery in severe cases.

Your dentist is part of your overall care team. For any stage of gum disease, a combination of daily home care and professional dental treatments is essential.

For details about your TRICARE Dental Program benefits, visit www.uccitdp.com. ★

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- **Periodontitis:** A more serious condition causing gums to recede from the teeth, creating pockets that can become infected. If it worsens, the body's immune system often responds by destroying the tissues and bone that hold the teeth in place.

If you have periodontal (gum) disease, you're not alone. Slightly less than half of all American adults (47.2 percent) have some form of it, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Though common, gum disease is a largely preventable condition. Its beginning stages can be reversed through optimal oral hygiene at home and periodic professional care at the dentist's office.

For more advanced stages, dentists can perform deep cleanings known as scaling and root planing. After your deep cleaning, you may need to see your dentist more frequently to ensure that you are healing properly. Your dentist

could also refer you to a periodontist, a gum-disease specialist.

TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) enrollees can get two routine dental exams, two routine cleanings, and two fluoride treatments in a consecutive 12-month period at no cost when seeing a network dentist. A third exam is also covered in this time frame when performed by a different dentist.

The TDP also provides enhanced benefits for members with certain chronic medical conditions. This ensures that you have access to the additional dental care that you might need to maintain a healthy mouth and fight gum disease.

The best defense is establishing good dental habits. Brush at least twice a day, floss, and visit with your dentist periodically.

For dental coverage details, visit www.uccitdp.com. ★

Healthy Eating Optimizes Oral Health

Nutritious foods help you maximize your overall health.

Whole foods like green apples, carrots, spinach, and avocados, for example, are great sources of nutrients; and their vitamins boost your oral health, according to the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion.

Some quick tips to help your physical and oral health:

- **Limit foods high in sugars:** Sugar promotes cavities and gum inflammation.
- **Go green:** Green tea reduces bad breath, helps digestion, and reduces inflammation and cavity-causing bacteria.
- **Hydrate often:** Most tap water and many bottled water varieties have fluoride, which helps prevent cavities. For a twist, infuse water with real pieces of fruit for added flavor.

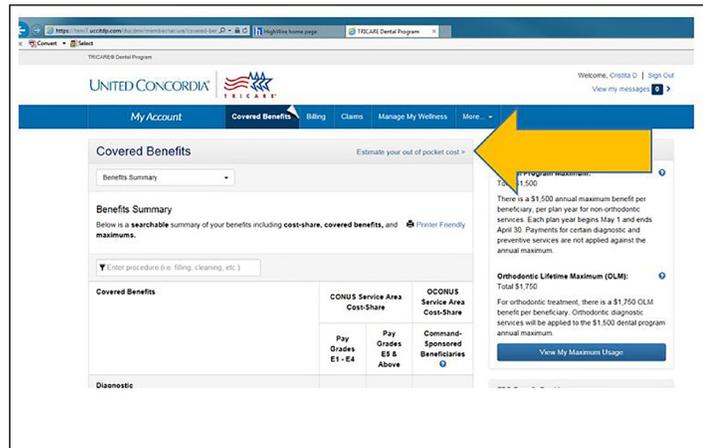
Nutritional foods keep your mouth healthy for a lifetime. Now that's something to smile about. ★



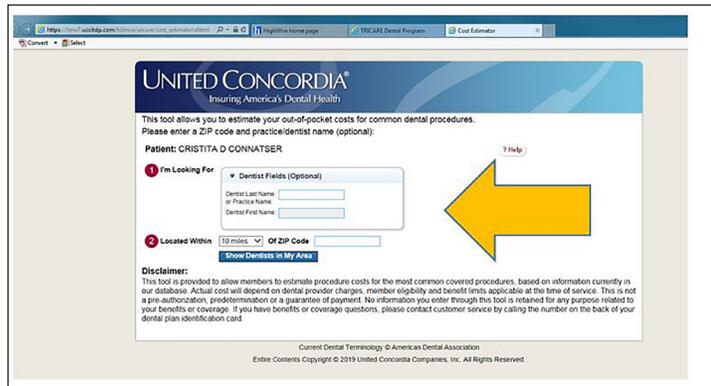
A Guide to Using TDP's Cost Estimator in My Account

TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) enrollees can estimate the costs of dental procedures through *My Account's* cost estimator.

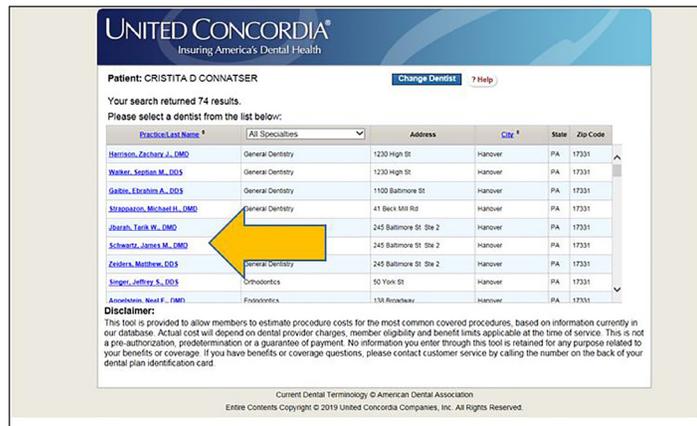
1. Login to TDP's *My Account* on www.uccitdp.com using your DS Logon. Select *Covered Benefits* at the top of the page. Then select *Estimate your out of pocket cost*.



2. Enter the dentist information or the relevant ZIP code. (You must input a ZIP code to proceed.)



3. Select the dentist who will perform the procedure. (You must select a dentist.)



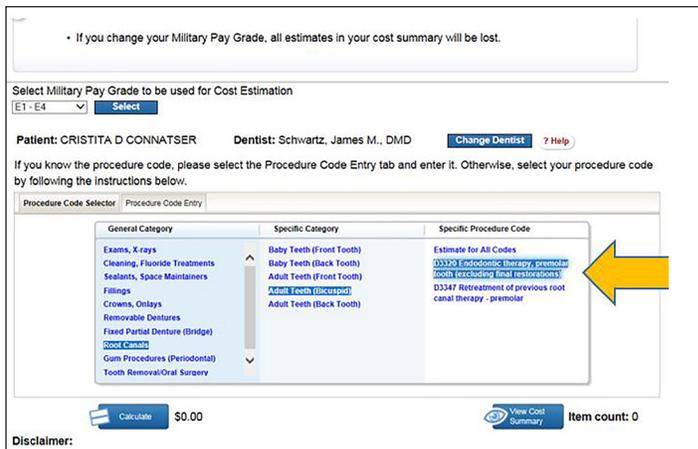
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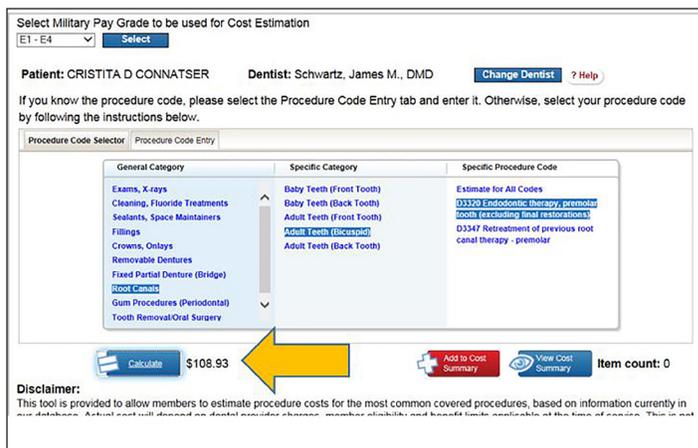
4. Go to the drop-down menu. Select *Military Pay Grade*, because cost-shares can vary depending on the sponsor's pay grade.



5. Navigate through the category options and select *Specific Procedure Code* for the work to be done.



6. Select *Calculate* to get the estimated charge. Select *Add to Cost Summary* if you want to tabulate the costs of multiple procedures.



Traveling? Pack a Dental Emergency Kit

If a dental emergency happens, it's important to find a dentist right away.

If that's not possible, a well-stocked dental emergency kit can help you deal with pain, bleeding, and other problems until you can see a dental professional.

Here's what you'll need to make one:

- **Cotton swabs:** to clean the area or as applicators
- **Cotton balls:** to help control bleeding
- **Alcohol wipes:** to clean and disinfect area
- **Dental floss:** to dislodge food particles stuck between teeth
- **Dental mirror:** to view inside of mouth
- **Latex gloves:** wear to assist someone other than yourself (use vinyl gloves if allergic to latex)
- **Dental wax:** to coat sharp edges of braces wires or other orthodontia
- **Salt:** combine with water to rinse mouth if cheek, gums, or tongue are injured (also can use a pinch of it to transport a knocked out tooth to the dentist)
- **Cold compress:** to reduce swelling

Stow everything in an airtight container and keep in a handy place where you can get to it quickly.

For more information, see the American Dental Association's www.mouthhealthy.org. ★

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Establish Healthy Dental Habits Early

Most children have a set of 20 teeth by the age of three. Are your little ones already brushing? Great! Just lend them a hand to make sure they're brushing effectively. And if they're not, get them started with this routine:

Brushing: Your child should brush twice a day with a soft-bristled toothbrush and a pea-sized amount of children's toothpaste. Have your child spit out any residue and rinse with water. Check with your child's dentist on when to introduce fluoride toothpaste.

Flossing: Help your child floss at least once a day to reach places their toothbrush can't.

Follow up: Check your little one's teeth after brushing to ensure all food particles are gone. Plus, if you're involved, it reinforces the importance of good oral hygiene.

Make it fun: If getting your child to brush and floss is like pulling teeth, shake things up. Try brushing your teeth with your child. Use matching toothbrushes, sing songs, or play brushing games to put some giggles into good oral hygiene.

For more information online, see mouthhealthy.org. ★

(Continued from page 5)

7. Once you've added a procedure to the *Cost Summary*, you can choose to add an additional procedure following the previous steps.

8. Add the second procedure to the *Cost Summary*.

9. If you select *View Cost Summary*, you'll see the procedures you estimated. This is your estimated out-of-pocket cost. You can add another procedure and print the cost summary. ★

Procedure Code	Procedure	Estimated Cost
D3320	Endodontic therapy, premolar tooth (excluding final restorations)	\$108.93
D2740	Crown - porcelain/ceramic	\$252.45
TOTAL:		\$361.38



What to Expect With Wisdom Teeth

Coming in during your late teens or early 20s, wisdom teeth (also called “third molars”) are the “final four” of your 32 permanent teeth.

Sometimes incoming molars can be painful, impacted, and cause problems.

They might not break through the gums properly—or sometimes not at all (i.e., impacted). Why? You might not have enough room for the teeth to break through. They can come in crooked or tilted, affecting an adjacent tooth.

Wisdom teeth might at some point require extraction, or tooth removal. Your dentist may prescribe medication for use after you leave the office to address pain or prevent infection.

Your dentist should monitor your wisdom teeth to ensure they’re coming in properly, even if there’s no pain. If there are problems, your dentist can recommend a treatment plan that’s right for you.



Impacted wisdom tooth at right

The TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) covers wisdom tooth removal; however, removal of impacted wisdom teeth in patients under age 15 and over age 30 is covered only with specific documentation provided that substantiates the need for removal and approval by the TDP.

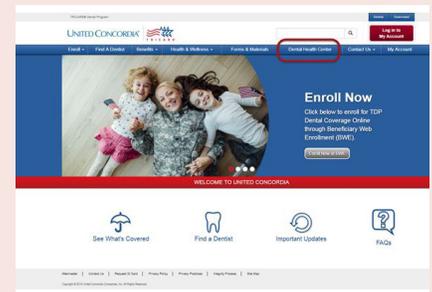
For more information online about wisdom teeth, see www.tricare.mil. TDP benefit details are available online at www.uccitdp.com. ★

New Dental Health Resources Online

The TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) Dental Health Center is an online resource with information about common dental conditions, treatments, and procedures.

You can find the link to the Dental Health Center at the top of the TDP home page. The center offers a wealth of information for families who want to know what to expect at the dentist’s office.

TDP Dental Health Center



Online: www.uccitdp.com

Dental Health Center topics include orthodontics, 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. ★

‘Show Us Your Smile’ on Facebook

The United Concordia Military Dental Facebook page features quick tips and timely updates about the TRICARE Dental Program (TDP).

While you’re on the page, post and share photos of you and your families’ smiles. Go ahead, “Show Us Your Smile!” United Concordia is proud to help protect your smiles and overall oral health. ★

Find us:
“United Concordia Military Dental”



HEALTH MATTERS

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CHECK THIS OUT...

Using TDP's Cost Estimator

Enrollees of all pay grades can use the TRICARE Dental Program's Cost Estimator to learn the costs of dental procedures. The estimator is a great planning tool.

See pages 4-6.

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Current TRICARE Dental Program Premium Rates

The following table lists your TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) monthly premium rates. TDP premium rates change annually on May 1. Visit the TDP website for more rates and benefit details at www.uccitdp.com.

SPONSOR STATUS	SPONSOR-ONLY PREMIUM	SINGLE PREMIUM (1 family member, not the sponsor)	FAMILY PREMIUM (more than 1 family member, not the sponsor)	SPONSOR-AND-FAMILY PREMIUM
Active Duty	N/A	\$11.54	\$30.00	N/A
Selected Reserve & Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) Mobilization Only	\$11.54	\$28.85	\$75.01	\$86.55
IRR (Non-Mobilization)	\$28.85	\$28.85	\$75.01	\$103.86

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
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BENEFICIARY WEB ENROLLMENT

milconnect.dmdc.osd.mil