



# HEALTH MATTERS

A PUBLICATION FOR TRICARE® BENEFICIARIES

The Dentist is In ...

## Addressing Adult Dental Concerns



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

Keeping up oral health is important throughout adulthood. However, everyday stressors can cause us to pay less attention to the substances we consume or inhale on a daily basis. Yet these substances can have a big impact on our oral health. By quitting smoking and chewing tobacco, monitoring the amount of sugar you eat, and limiting the number of acidic drinks you consume, you can create good oral health habits that will last a lifetime.

According to the American Dental Association, there are a few concerns for adults when it comes to oral health:

- **Gum disease:** If your gums appear to be red and puffy or bleed when brushing, it's time to see your dentist. You may be at risk for gum disease.
- **Medical condition:** If you have a health condition that requires you to regularly take medication or seek drug therapy, make sure to keep a close eye on your dental health.
- **Pregnancy:** Pregnancy can worsen some dental problems, so don't miss your regular checkup. It's safe and recommended to see your dentist more often when pregnant.
- **Dry mouth:** Being thirsty or having a perpetual dry mouth can cause oral problems such as cavities and bad breath. A medical condition or medication you're currently taking may be the cause, but it's a good idea to let your dentist know. Be sure to drink more water and fewer acidic drinks such as soda or coffee if you have dry mouth.
- **Tobacco use:** From bad breath to oral cancer, cigarettes and chewing tobacco are harmful to your overall health and dental health.
- **Dental procedures:** If you've had prior dental work, such as fillings, crowns, dental implants, or dentures, it's important to see your dentist for regular check-ups.

A healthy mouth contributes to a healthy body. To learn more about your dental benefit, to see what's covered, or to find a dentist in your area, visit [www.uccitdp.com](http://www.uccitdp.com).

Thank you,

COL Christensen Hsu



ISSUE 4 | 2019

### ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS

#### Toothbrush Dos and Don'ts

Make sure you're getting all you can from brushing by following these simple tips. **See page 3.**

#### Network Dentists in the U.S.: Good for Your Smile and Wallet

TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) providers use negotiated fees, which are usually lower than the normal rate in your local area. **See page 5.**

#### Breast Cancer and Oral Health Complications

Breast cancer patients can experience surprising oral health complications as a result of their therapy. **See page 6.**



## Calcium: Abundant and Good for Your Teeth

Calcium is the most abundant mineral found in the human body, making it an important building block. According to the National Library of Medicine, 99% of this supply goes toward supporting the bones and teeth of our skeletal system.

Calcium is especially important for children and teens as their bodies grow. When children eat a calcium-rich diet, they're giving their bodies the needed nutrients for strong bones and teeth.

As children grow older, their daily calcium needs change. According to the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) released by the departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services:

Babies usually get calcium and other nutrients through breastmilk or formula.

- Children ages 1-3 need 700 milligrams daily.

- Children ages 4-8 require 1,000 milligrams daily.
- Children ages 9-13 need 1,300 milligrams daily.
- Adults with average dietary needs typically require 1,000 milligrams of calcium daily.
- Postmenopausal women may need an additional 200 milligrams daily.

While milk is the widest-known nutritional source of calcium, there are many other food options to enjoy.

Here are some ideas:

- Plain, low fat yogurt (1 cup): 415 milligrams
- Part skim mozzarella (1.5 oz): 333 milligrams
- Sardines in oil (3 oz): 325 milligrams

- Calcium-fortified soymilk (1 cup): 299 milligrams
- Fresh cooked kale (1 cup): 94 milligrams
- Reduced-fat sour cream (2 tbsp): 31 milligrams
- Calcium-fortified cereal (1 cup): 100-1,000 milligrams

For more about the importance of oral care, or to learn more about your TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) benefits, visit [www.uccitdp.com](http://www.uccitdp.com). ★

Additional sources: [KidsHealth for Parents: Calcium, 2017](#); [National Institutes of Health, Office of Dietary Supplements, 2019](#); [Johns Hopkins: Staying Healthy After Menopause, 2018](#)

## Toothbrush Dos and Don'ts

You may take it for granted, but your soft-bristled toothbrush is your first line of defense against gum disease. Make sure you're getting all you can out of brushing by following these simple American Dental Association tips:

### DO:

- Replace your toothbrush every 3–4 months (or sooner if the bristles start to bend or fray).
- Rinse your toothbrush with tap water after brushing and allow it to air dry. The wetter your stored toothbrush, the more welcoming it'll be to bacteria.
- Store your toothbrush upright so it can drain and air dry faster.
- Allow your toothbrush to air dry completely before packing it away for a vacation.

### DON'T:

- Share toothbrushes. Sharing could spread germs and bacteria that cause tooth decay.
- Place your toothbrush in a small container for long periods of time. Moisture encourages bacteria to grow.
- Keep your toothbrush near the toilet. Germs become airborne during flushing and could end up on your toothbrush.

### Toothbrush Care

- Your toothbrush doesn't require any special cleaning.
- Washing your toothbrush in a dishwasher can damage it, reducing its functionality. Simply running it under tap water will do the trick. ★

## Mouth Sores Have Different Causes

Sores in or around the mouth can be both painful and annoying. Two of the most common types of mouth sores are cold sores and canker sores.

### Cold Sores

Also known as fever blisters, cold sores are small groupings of blisters that generally appear near the outer edges of the lips, under the nose, or around the chin. These highly contagious sores are caused by the herpes simplex virus type 1, which can live within a person's body. A person may be prone to recurring outbreaks throughout his or her life, which can be brought on by stress, emotional upsets, fever, or sunburn. If over-the-counter topical painkillers don't provide enough relief, your dentist may prescribe antiviral drugs to combat these symptoms.

### Canker Sores

Canker sores, which aren't contagious, are small grey or white ulcers with a red border that appear inside the mouth. There may be only one or they can appear in groups. The exact causes are unknown, but fatigue, stress, or allergies can increase the likelihood of developing one.

If you have a painful mouth sore that doesn't heal after more than a week, talk to your dentist. Visit [www.uccitdp.com](http://www.uccitdp.com) and select the "Find a Dentist" link to find a TRICARE Dental Program network dentist near you. ★

Source: [Healthline](http://Healthline)



## Reduce Your Risks for Oral Cancer

Oral cancer isn't widely discussed, but the National Institutes of Health estimate that nearly 50,000 new cases are reported annually. You can limit your risks for oral cancer when you:

- Get routine dental checkups. Your dentist will check for signs of oral cancer at each visit.
- Avoid tobacco products and overuse of alcohol. Used together, they greatly increase the risk of oral cancer.
- Perform self-checks. Regularly examine all of your mouth with a mirror. Include the tongue, floor, and roof of the mouth. Symptoms can include painful sores, a red patch in the mouth, bad breath, frequent bleeding, difficulty opening the mouth or swallowing, or numbness in the lower teeth or lip or chin area.

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.

Remember that using a non-network dentist can cost more out-of-pocket. TDP enrollees can use the online "Find a Dentist" tool to find a network dentist near them or to confirm that a dentist is in the TDP network. Go online to [www.uccitdp.com](http://www.uccitdp.com) and select "Find a Dentist." ★



## Gum That's Healthy for You

Clinical studies from the American Dental Association (ADA) show that chewing sugarless gum for 20 minutes a day after meals can increase saliva flow and help stop tooth decay.

Be sure to look for chewing gum carrying the ADA seal. Chewing gum with the ADA seal ensures that it's sugarless and therefore better for your oral health. All gums with the ADA seal are sweetened by non-cavity causing sweeteners such as aspartame, sorbitol, mannitol, or xylitol. It's true that chewing sugar-containing gum increases saliva flow. But because it contains sugar, it can cause tooth decay.

Xylitol, which is one of the sweeteners used in sugarless gum, is also found in small amounts in many fruits and vegetables. Xylitol sweetens some candy, mints, and oral care products. It's also used in diabetic food products because it doesn't cause a spike in blood levels.

Xylitol's biggest benefit is that oral bacteria, which can cause diseases like gingivitis, can't feed on it and grow as they would with normal sugars. When following a healthy diet and maintaining good oral hygiene, chewing gum sweetened with xylitol leaves the bacteria in your mouth with little to support their growth.

Xylitol's other benefits include:

- Absorption of calcium, which isn't only good for your teeth but can also protect against bone loss and fractures.
- An increased production of saliva that contains calcium and prevents dry mouth.
- A reduction of acid levels in the saliva after eating or drinking, which helps fight loss of tooth enamel.

Don't let chewing sugarless gum replace brushing and flossing. Xylitol helps but isn't a substitute for brushing and flossing.

The ADA still recommends brushing twice a day, using a fluoride toothpaste, and cleaning plaque from between your teeth once a day by flossing.

For more information on the benefits of sugarless gum, visit [www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/c/chewing-gum](http://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/c/chewing-gum). ★

# Network Dentists in the U.S.: Good for Your Smile and Your Wallet

As a TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) enrollee living in the U.S., you have the flexibility to seek care from any civilian dentist. However, when you select a United Concordia TDP network dentist, you can reduce both your out-of-pocket costs and your paperwork.

A network dentist has signed a contractual agreement with United Concordia Companies Inc. to follow TDP rules for providing care and accepting payments. Some of the rewards of using a network dentist include:

- **Saving money.** Network dentists accept United Concordia's allowance for covered services as payment in full and charge you only the needed cost-share. With a non-network dentist, you may need to pay the difference between United Concordia's allowance and the dentist's charge.
- **Saving time.** Network dentists complete your claim form at no

extra charge and submit it to United Concordia on your behalf. If you see a non-network dentist, you may need to submit your own claim.

- **Peace of mind.** Network dentists are subject to United Concordia's quality assurance programs and agree to regular checks of their credentials.
- **U.S. dental readiness documentation.** Network dentists complete the Department of Defense Active Duty/ Reserve/Guard/Civilian Forces Dental Examination Form (DD Form 2813) for National Guard and Reserve members at no additional cost.

## How Do I Know if My Dentist Is a United Concordia TDP Network Dentist?

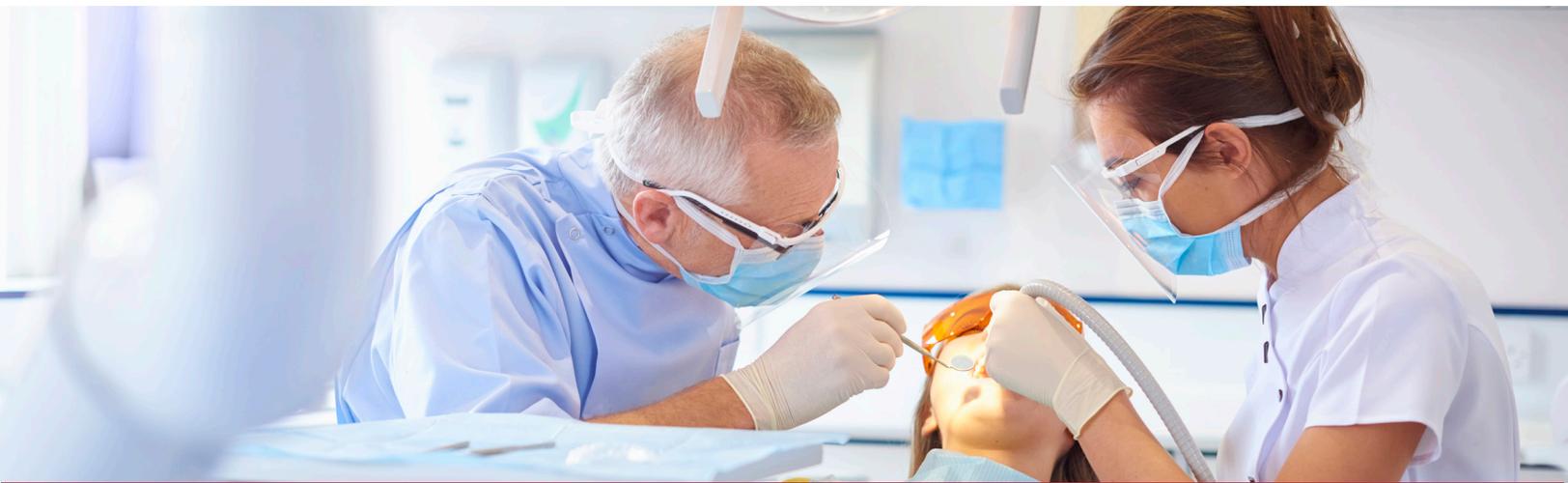
Be sure to ask your dentist if he or she is a **United Concordia TDP Network** dentist, rather than if he or she accepts TDP or United Concordia. Most dentists

(both network and non-network) will accept payment from United Concordia. However, that does not mean that a dentist is part of the TDP network.

## Finding a Network Dentist

Use the online dentist directory. Visit the TDP website at [www.uccitdp.com](http://www.uccitdp.com) and select the "Find a Dentist" link at the top of the page. You can search for a dentist by last name, specialty, city, county, or ZIP code.

The online directory is updated weekly and tells if the dentist is accepting new patients. ★





## Breast Cancer and Oral Health Complications

Apart from skin cancer, breast cancer is the most common cancer in American women, according to the American Cancer Society. More than 3.1 million breast cancer survivors live in the U.S.

Breast cancer patients can experience surprising oral health complications as a result of their therapy. Cancer treatments such as chemotherapy and radiation therapy, stem cell transplants, pain medications, and antidepressants and anti-anxiety medications can lead to mouth sores and ulcers. These treatments can also lead to difficulty swallowing, dry mouth, cavities, and gum disease.

It's possible to prevent or manage some of these oral health side effects by taking extra good care of your mouth, teeth, and gums and staying on course with your dental visits before and during treatment:

- Talk with your dentist about your cancer diagnosis and treatment as

soon as possible. You might need to schedule a dental checkup or appointment before starting cancer treatment, especially if you haven't had a checkup recently. You'll want to get any recommended dental procedures done before your body's ability to heal itself is compromised due to cancer treatments.

- Allow time to heal from any dental treatment before beginning cancer treatment, if possible. Your dentist can recommend how much healing time you need between dental procedures and receiving cancer treatment.

A clean mouth, which includes your teeth, gums, and tongue, helps protect you from mouth infections and helps to prevent issues such as cavities or teeth sensitivity. It's important to practice good oral care by brushing, flossing, and rinsing your mouth with water throughout the day to keep away bacteria.

Staying hydrated and having a healthy diet can also help you maintain good overall health.

TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) enrollees are covered for two routine dental cleanings, exams, and two topical fluoride treatments in an ongoing 12-month period. For more TDP benefit information, go to [www.uccitdp.com](http://www.uccitdp.com).

Enrollees with chronic medical conditions, including oral cancer, are able to receive enhanced benefits with no cost share when seeing a TDP network dentist. To register a chronic medical condition, log into *My Account* at [www.uccitdp.com](http://www.uccitdp.com) and select "Manage My Wellness."

If you need help finding a TDP network dentist near you, go to [www.uccitdp.com](http://www.uccitdp.com) and select the "Find a Dentist" link. ★

## Oral Health Resources Online

The TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) Dental Health Center is an online resource with information about common dental conditions, treatments, and procedures for TDP enrollees. You can find this resource at [www.uccitdp.com](http://www.uccitdp.com). Select the “Dental Health Center” link at the top of the page.

The center offers a wealth of information for families who want to know what to expect at the dentist’s office, including common dental procedures, nutrition tips, and connections between many medical and oral health conditions.

### Additional Online Resources

For details about who is eligible for TDP, network dentists, how to enroll, and benefits, you’ll find more resources at [www.uccitdp.com](http://www.uccitdp.com):

- TRICARE Dental Program Handbook
- TDP “Find a Dentist” application
- Ways to enroll
- Wellness brochures
- An archive of the *Health Matters* newsletters.
- Forms for claims, Power of Attorney, the HIPAA Privacy Release, and more. ★

## Survivor Benefit Information

The TRICARE Dental Program’s (TDP) Survivor Benefit replaces the TDP when a sponsor dies. It provides the same benefit coverage as the TDP for surviving military families; however, TDP premiums are paid at 100% for these survivors.

### Who is Eligible?

#### Surviving spouses and children are eligible for the TDP Survivor Benefit when a sponsor dies.

Spouses are eligible for three years beginning on the date of the sponsor’s death. Children are eligible until age 21, or until they turn 23 if certain conditions related to their school enrollment and financial support apply.\*

Survivors who were enrolled in the TDP at the time of the sponsor’s death don’t need to do anything to keep their coverage. Survivors will be notified when TDP coverage is canceled and they become enrolled in the Survivor Benefit.

Survivors can use the TDP Survivor Benefit even if they weren’t enrolled in the TDP at the time of the sponsor’s death. These survivors will be automatically notified of their eligibility and advised to contact United Concordia for enrollment.

\* See the “Age-Related Eligibility Rules” and other details about the TDP Survivor Benefit at [www.uccitdp.com](http://www.uccitdp.com). Once on TDP’s home page, select *Benefits* and then *TDP for survivors* from the drop-down menu. ★





# HEALTH MATTERS

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

Presorted  
Standard  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**

## CHECK THIS OUT...

### Survivor Benefit Information

The TRICARE Dental Program's (TDP) Survivor Benefit replaces the TDP when a sponsor dies. It provides the same benefit coverage as the TDP for surviving military families; however, TDP premiums are paid at 100% for these survivors. **See page 7.**

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

## Dental Coordination of Benefits

**Coordination of Benefits (COB)** is a phrase that refers to the process of determining which of two or more insurance policies will have the primary responsibility of processing and paying a claim, and the extent to which the other policy might contribute.

If you are enrolled in the TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) and have other dental insurance, United Concordia will coordinate benefits between the two plans. Depending on the situation, the TDP may act as primary or secondary payee. ★



### TRICARE DENTAL PROGRAM RESOURCES

[www.uccitdp.com](http://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>