

TRICARE Dental Health Matters



Issue 3: 2007

A PUBLICATION FOR TRICARE DENTAL PROGRAM ENROLLEES

The Dentist is in ...

*Col. Gary Martin, USAF, DDS, MPH
Dental Care Division Director
TRICARE Management Activity*

TRICARE recently implemented two important changes that enhance TRICARE's dental coverage and improve access to care. The first change improves coverage for general anesthesia and institutional costs, which are covered under the TRICARE medical benefit. The second change improves access to dental care for TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) members in overseas locations by simplifying the payment and claim submission processes.

General Anesthesia

Effective July 1, 2007, the TRICARE medical benefit began covering general anesthesia services and institutional costs for dental treatment provided to beneficiaries with developmental, mental or physical disabilities, and to children age 5 or under.

Established by the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2007, this change specifically affects TRICARE beneficiaries' dental coverage through the TRICARE medical benefit. Reimbursement for general anesthesia and institutional costs will be based on beneficiaries' selected TRICARE program option (e.g., TRICARE Prime, TRICARE Standard, TRICARE Extra, etc.). Members should contact their TRICARE regional contractor for prior authorization before seeking these services. Although general anesthesia is also a TDP-covered benefit, the member has a 40-percent cost-share and the TDP does not cover the institutional, or facility, fee.

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Never Too Young to Start

Teaching your children good dental health habits at an early age is a lesson that will pay off for them as they grow up and throughout their entire lives.

Start Early

Because dental problems can start early, you should schedule your child's first dentist visit before their first birthday. The first trip to the dentist can come as early as the appearance of their first tooth, but within their first year is a good guideline to follow.

With a few simple steps and some support and supervision, you can help your children increase their chances of reaching adulthood without experiencing tooth decay.

Before your baby's first tooth begins showing, it is a good idea to clean the gums with a gauze pad, soft washcloth or a soft infant toothbrush. The American Dental Association® recommends using just water instead of toothpaste until children are 2 years old.

When it is time for children to start brushing on their own, it's important for parents to supervise. Young children should use a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste and be taught to spit out the remaining toothpaste and rinse when they finish brushing.

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The Dentist is in ...

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If you use your medical benefit for these services, it will not be counted against your TDP \$1,200 annual maximum benefit. You should make an informed decision as to which coverage is best for you.

The maximum allowable benefit for CONUS/OCONUS is \$1,200 per active duty family member per contract year.

“This change helps to enhance the benefits offered by the TRICARE program and enables beneficiaries with special needs to receive the dental care they need,” said Dr. Gary Martin, an Air Force colonel, dentist and TRICARE Dental Care Division Director.

Dr. Martin encourages parents to use the preventive care benefits offered by the TDP. “To avoid costly and extensive dental procedures requiring general anesthesia, remember to take your children to the dentist when they get their first tooth. This will help prevent tooth decay.”

Overseas Civilian Dental Care

The TDP recently added a new list of preferred dentists outside the Continental United States (OCONUS). The vast majority of these preferred dentists will be in non-remote locations. TDP members seeking dental care

overseas will only have to pay the applicable cost-share, not the full payment, up front when they see a preferred dentist. Additionally, preferred dentists will submit claims on behalf of TDP members.

Until recently, many host nation providers required payment in full before dental treatment was provided. Members would then have to submit a claim for reimbursement.

Dr. Martin explained, “Members often delay needed dental treatment because they don’t have the money up front. Adding preferred dentists to the program will help improve access to care for our TDP family members living overseas.”

For more information about this program, please see “The TDP Improves Quality for Enrollees Overseas” on page 6 of this newsletter.

If you are a TDP member who is anticipating a move overseas, please do not disenroll from the TDP until you know whether there is an OCONUS military dental treatment facility available and what dental services can be provided. When you live overseas, the TDP provides coverage for approved dental care that is not available at the overseas dental treatment facility. ■

Never Too Young to Start

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Helpful Hints

Getting children to brush twice a day can be a challenge. Some children may master brushing quicker than others. Some ways to encourage your child include:

- Use a favorite stuffed animal or doll to demonstrate how to brush. Have your children brush their own teeth and then help their friend by brushing the stuffed animal’s teeth.
- Brush your teeth at the same time as your child. Have them copy your actions: wetting the brush, squeezing out the toothpaste, brushing and rinsing.
- Make a chart your child can put a sticker on each time they brush.
- Let your child help you pick out a fluoride toothpaste. If they like the taste they are more likely to enjoy brushing.

With a little encouragement you can help your child develop good dental hygiene habits and maintain a healthy mouth. ■

Osteoporosis and Your Oral Health

Research suggests that osteoporosis, a disease that causes the bones to lose density and become more prone to fracture, may be linked to bone loss in the jaw, which can lead to periodontal disease and tooth loss. And although osteoporosis primarily affects older adults, there are some things you can do today, no matter what your age, to maintain or improve the health of your bones and ward off potential oral health problems.

One of the best things you can do is visit your dentist. Since you may see your dentist more regularly than your doctor, your dentist is in a unique position to help identify potential signs of osteoporosis. Loose teeth, receding gums and ill-fitting or loose dentures may be indicators of low bone density.

Additionally, dental X-rays may be an effective screening tool for osteoporosis. Research supported by the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases found that dental X-rays were highly effective in distinguishing people with osteoporosis from those with normal bone density.

Here are some other steps you can take to improve the health of your teeth and bones:

- Eat a well-balanced diet rich in calcium and vitamin D.
- Don't smoke.
- If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation.
- Get active with weight-bearing activities such as walking, jogging, dancing and lifting weights.
- Brush regularly with a fluoride toothpaste. Research shows that fluoride may stimulate the formation of new bone.
- If you notice any problems with your teeth, gums or dentures, talk to your dentist or doctor. ■

Claims Department Brings Joy to Iraqi Children

Playtime is an essential part of childhood, but unfortunately there are many Iraqi children who do not have access to toys or play equipment.

After seeing requests from the U.S. military for soccer balls for Iraqi children, the TRICARE Dental Program's Claims Department decided to respond. Employees hosted a departmental drive that would enable these children to enjoy a favorite pastime—playing soccer.

“We had an amazing response from our department,” said Nancee Holley, administrative assistant. “In a small way, it demonstrates our country's collective generosity and the true American spirit. When it comes to responding to others in crisis, Americans [tend to] open up their hearts and wallets.”

Each employee in the Claims Department was given the opportunity to donate a soccer ball that would be sent to troops serving in Iraq. In March, the department sent 48 soccer balls overseas to be distributed to the children.

The department sponsors two drives a year to support the troops and the employees thought this gesture would be an excellent opportunity to help put a smile on some children's faces in Iraq. ■



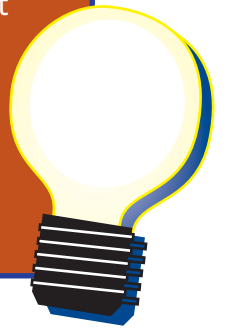
KIDS DENTAL HEALTH FUN PAGE

The following pages are filled with fun games and information that will help you learn more about your teeth and the importance of good oral hygiene.

Activities include: Fun Facts about Teeth; Tooth Match; Learn the Parts of Your Teeth; and Dental Care Crossword Puzzle.

Fun Facts about Teeth

- Your teeth are made of the hardest substance in the body—enamel.
- Dogs have 42 teeth.
- Horses have 38–44 teeth.
- Cats have 30 teeth.
- Adult humans have 32 teeth.



Major Molar's Mission: Healthy Teeth and Happy Smiles

Major Molar takes charge of dental health activities by encouraging new recruits to brush and floss regularly. Practicing good oral hygiene by brushing twice a day helps to remove bacteria and plaque buildup that can cause cavities. Flossing at least once a day can help remove food particles that get stuck between your teeth and help your gums stay healthy.

Major Molar also suggests getting regular fluoride treatments. Fluoride strengthens tooth enamel, which helps protect your teeth from tooth decay.

Join Major Molar and his command, including Sergeant Toothpaste and Captain Floss, on their campaign to improve your dental health and keep your teeth and mouth healthy and happy!



Tooth Match

How well do you know your teeth? Several teeth in your mouth—the incisor, canine, premolar and molar—have specific jobs, or “functions.” Do you know what they are? To match the tooth with its particular job, draw a line from the tooth pictured in the “Tooth” column to its job in the “Function” column. *(Answers are on page 5.)*

Tooth

Canine



Molar



Premolar



Incisor



Function

Grinding

Cutting/tearing

Tearing Food

Grinding

Dental Care Crossword Puzzle

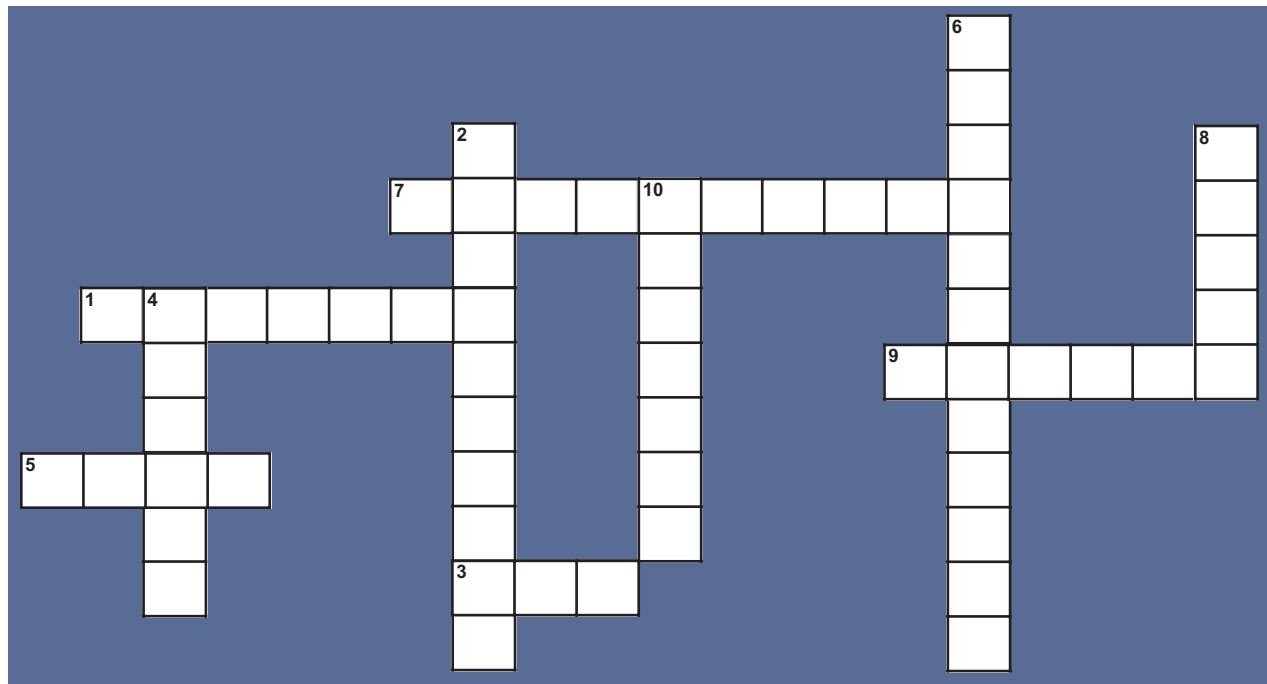
ACROSS

1. See your _____ at least twice a year.
3. Brush your teeth at least _____ times a day.
5. Your _____ are made up of soft pink tissue around your teeth.
7. Your _____ should have soft bristles.
9. _____ have a bumpy surface perfect for helping you grind your food.

DOWN

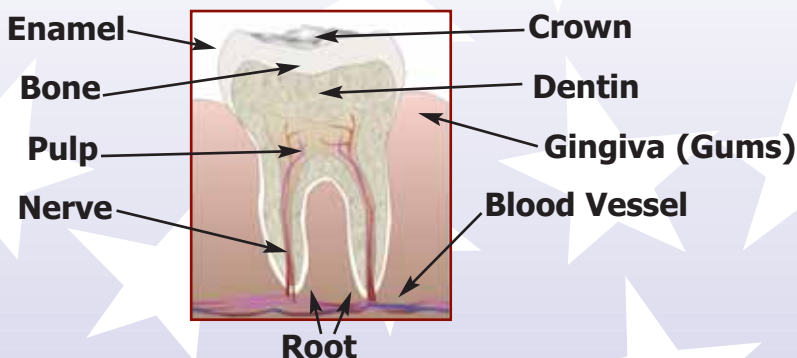
2. Use a small pea-sized amount of _____ each time you brush.
4. The outer layer of a tooth is made of _____.
6. If you have braces you usually see an _____ to have them adjusted.
8. Remember to _____ between your teeth at least once a day.
10. Proper oral _____ helps you maintain a healthy smile.

The answers are at the bottom of the puzzle—but try finishing the puzzle before you look!



*Crossword Puzzle Answers:
Across: 1. dentist, 3. two, 5. gums, 7. toothbrush, 9. molars
Down: 2. toothpaste, 4. enamel, 6. orthodontist, 8. floss, 10. hygiene*

Learn the Parts of Your Teeth



Tooth Match Answers:
 Incisor: Cutting/tearing
 Canine: Tearing food
 Premolar: Grinding
 Molar: Grinding

The TDP Improves Quality for Enrollees Overseas

Visit a TRICARE OCONUS Preferred Dentist to Make Payment and Claim Submission Easier

TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) enrollees seeking civilian dental care in overseas locations now have a new and improved process, thanks to the TRICARE Management Activity (TMA) and United Concordia.

To ensure members receive quality care in a clean and professional environment, individual dental offices are visited by a contracted dental professional. During these visits, the professional will meet with the host nation dentist and their staff and complete a comprehensive checklist developed by TMA.

Dental offices outside the Continental United States (OCONUS) meeting all of the checklist requirements are listed on the official Host Nation Provider Listing available at www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com.

Following a favorable visit, these dentists are invited to become TRICARE OCONUS Preferred Dentists (TOPDs). This designation, also indicated on the Host Nation Provider Listing, means these dentists have signed an agreement with United Concordia to provide you with additional conveniences.

TOPDs will:

- Submit predeterminations to United Concordia for complex and costly services before rendering treatment.
- Complete and submit your claim forms.
- Require you to pay only your applicable cost-share (if any) at the time of service.

Please remember that current *OCONUS Non-Availability and Referral Form (NARF)* requirements remain in place for orthodontic and implant-related dental services.

Detailed information and the complete list of preferred dentists are available on the TDP Web site at www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com. If you do not have access to the Internet, you may call the United Concordia OCONUS Dental Unit toll free at 1-888-418-0466 or e-mail us at oconus@ucci.com. ■

Caregivers and Dental Health

When you're working as a caregiver to a family member or friend, taking care of their oral health is an important part of their overall care and helps add to their quality of life. A healthy mouth helps them to eat well, avoid pain and tooth loss, and feel good about themselves.

Whether it is an elderly parent, a child or an adult with a developmental disability, helping someone brush and floss their teeth every day isn't always easy.

"Tell, Show, Do"

According to the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR), dental care can be frightening to some people at first. They suggest the "tell-show-do" approach to deal with this natural reaction.

Tell the person about each step before you do it. For example, explain how you'll help him or her brush and what it feels like.

Show the person how you're going to do each step before you do it. Also, it might help to let him or her hold the toothbrush or floss.

Do the steps in the same way that you've explained, and give the person time to adjust to dental care. Be patient as this person learns to trust you working in and around his or her mouth.

Other suggestions include:

- Use your voice and body to communicate that you care.
- Give positive feedback often to reinforce good behavior.
- Have a routine for dental care.
- Use the same technique at the same time and place every day.
- Be creative. Some caregivers allow the person in their care to hold a favorite toy or special item for comfort.



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Caregivers and Dental Health

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It's also important to make sure the toothbrush you're using is up to the task. Dentists recommend getting a new one (with soft bristles) every three months, after a contagious illness or when the bristles are worn.

Office Visits

Another important aspect of good oral health for the person in your care is to visit the dentist on a regular basis.

Just like home dental care, it's important for you to make sure the person is comfortable at the dentist's office. The NIDCR suggests that a "get acquainted" visit involving no treatment might be helpful. The dentist can speak to the person and provide instructions on how to brush and floss.

To prepare for the visit you should:

- Know the person's dental history.
- Bring a complete medical history.
- Bring all insurance, billing and legal information.
- Be on time.

By brushing and flossing every day and making regular visits to a dentist, you can make sure the person in your care will have a healthy mouth.

For more information go to www.nidcr.nih.gov, click on "Health Information," then "Diseases and Conditions." From that page select "Developmental Disabilities and Oral Health" and then click on "Dental Care Every Day: A Caregiver's Guide" under the "For Caregivers" heading. ■

Customer Service Department Shows Support for Military Unit

Following the injury of Carol Kell's nephew while serving on his second tour of duty in Iraq, fellow members of the TRICARE Dental Program's Customer Service Department wanted to show their support.

Kell's nephew, PFC Craig Bowes, and his unit, Delta Company, 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, were attacked when an explosive-filled truck drove into a building and detonated upon impact. As a result, there were casualties and other injuries to the members of Bowes' unit. Bowes, who was treated in Germany, has returned to his unit on light duty.

The Customer Service Department's Activity Team coordinated a collection of snacks, phone cards and DVDs to send to the unit as a show of support for their sacrifices.

"It is a pleasure to work for a company that is so committed to the support of our military members," Ms. Kell said. "When Craig was injured, the TDP Customer Service Department immediately decided that it wanted to get involved. As we learned more of what Craig and his unit endured, the donations of comfort items filled two boxes."

On April 17, the team shipped those boxes to the unit in Iraq along with a thank-you card signed by everyone who made a contribution.

"My nephew assures me that having the support of individuals and companies like United Concordia makes the stay in a foreign land so much more bearable," said Ms. Kell. ■



(L to R front): Eliza Magill, Kathy Schnee, Antia Zegers, Lori Souders
(L to R back): Courtney Pegues, Lisa Balko, Nichole Hendershot, Karen Dill

Month of the Military Child

Random Drawing Winners!

United Concordia is pleased to announce and congratulate the contest winners in each TRICARE Region:

North:

Ages 0–4:

First Prize – **Andrew Mullinax**
 Second Prize – **Erik McKenna**
 Third Prize – **Spencer Lecco**

Ages 5–7:

First Prize – **Samuel J. McCarthy**
 Second Prize – **Ellie Mittauer**
 Third Prize – **Abbey White**

Ages 8–12:

First Prize – **Blake Shatto**
 Second Prize – **Austin Michael Mathew Hall**
 Third Prize – **Madison Gunning**

Ages 13–17:

First Prize – **Jordan McGuire**
 Second Prize – **Jayme Haverty**
 Third Prize – **Joshua Iverson**

South:

Ages 0–4:

First Prize – **Nicholas Stephenson**
 Second Prize – **Trevor Lane Spurgers**
 Third Prize – **Erin Jones**

Ages 5–7:

First Prize – **Victoria Stewart**
 Second Prize – **Amanda Sieps**
 Third Prize – **Jarrett Schofield**

Ages 8–12:

First Prize – **Taylor A. Porter**
 Second Prize – **Raven E. Sanchez**
 Third Prize – **Kevin Bond**

Ages 13–17:

First Prize – **Cody Melvin**
 Second Prize – **Eural Cole Cash**
 Third Prize – **Johnathan McClintick**

West:

Ages 0–4:

First Prize – **Sophia Figueroa**
 Second Prize – **Oscar Pederson**
 Third Prize – **Landon Sanders**

Ages 5–7:

First Prize – **Andrew Hamm**
 Second Prize – **Rebecca Velazquez**
 Third Prize – **Becca Joy Root**

Ages 8–12:

First Prize – **Silverius Alcaide III**
 Second Prize – **Lindsey N. Martinez**
 Third Prize – **Sebastian Frank**

Ages 13–17:

First Prize – **April Leuci**
 Second Prize – **Bodhi Fish**
 Third Prize – **Ashley Dearth**

Europe:

Ages 0–4:

First Prize – **Eleanor Eungard**
 Second Prize – **Sidney Rouse**
 Third Prize – **Matthew Leon**

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Month of the Military Child Random Drawing Winners!

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Ages 5–7:

First Prize – **Skye Fowler**
Second Prize – **Nichole Kasmierski**
Third Prize – **Jeremiah Steed**

Ages 8–12:

First Prize – **Hannah Dimmick**
Second Prize – **Jessica Johnston**
Third Prize – **Nate Hohman**

Ages 13–17:

First Prize – **Marcus Brown**
Second Prize – **Danilo Del Pino, Jr.**
Third Prize – **Laura Rich**

Pacific:

Ages 0–4:

First Prize – **Olivia S. Agustin**
Second Prize – **Cheyne M. Miller**
Third Prize – **Bryan Sansom**

Ages 5–7:

First Prize – **Jedidiah Henderschedt**
Second Prize – **Joshua Goepner**
Third Prize – **Destiny M. Boone**

Ages 8–12:

First Prize – **Ayanna N. Jackson-Charles**
Second Prize – **Brittney-Marie Ashley Nordskog**
Third Prize – **DeVante Willis**

Ages 13–17:

First Prize – **Briana Quintanilla**
Second Prize – **Matthew Grgas**
Third Prize – **Joseph Bass**

Latin America/Canada:

Ages 0–4:

First Prize – **Gennsen Lincoln**
Second Prize – **Zachary Bandt**
Third Prize – **Adrianna M. Rivera**

Ages 5–7:

First Prize – **Christopher Figueroa Viera**
Second Prize – **Ariannis M. Rivera**
Third Prize – **Alexander Bandt**

Ages 8–12:

First Prize – **Valeria N. Quinones**
Second Prize – **Alhec Andre Santiago**
Third Prize – **Matthew Hoerr**

Ages 13–17:

First Prize – **Adam Bandt**
Second Prize – **Michael Hoerr**
Third Prize – **Andrea M. Rivera**

Prizes

First prize winners ages 0–4 received a VTech® V.Smile Baby™ Infant Development System.

First prize winners ages 5–7 received a VTech Nitro Notebook™.

First prize winners ages 8–12 and 13–17 received an iPod® Shuffle™.

Second prize winners (all ages) received a \$100 U.S. Savings Bond.

Third prize winners (all ages) received a \$25 Army and Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) gift card.

United Concordia thanks everyone who entered this year's contest. We appreciate your support of our Nation, the military family and the TRICARE Dental Program.

Note: Winners were randomly selected based on their TRICARE region. Any entry submitted with an incorrect region was researched and re-entered in the applicable region to ensure consideration. Winners will be notified by United Concordia. ■

Evaluating Children under Age 3

An Important Step in Preventing Dental Caries

After years of research, it is now understood that early intervention can prevent dental caries (tooth decay), which is an infectious but preventable disease.

Did you know that dental caries can be transmitted from a mother or caregiver to a child in the first few years of a child's life? Or that dental caries is an infectious disease that can be spread by sharing utensils and toothbrushes and by cleaning pacifiers by putting them in your own mouth?

It is important to understand how caries occurs, how it can be passed from one person to another and how it can be prevented. Your child should be seen by a dentist within the first six months following the eruption of their first tooth. The main goal of this evaluation is to educate the parent or caregiver about dental caries and how to prevent it.

When you take your infant or toddler to the dentist for their first visit, there are several things that the dentist will do as part of this evaluation. They include:

- Examining your child's mouth
- Taking an oral and health history
- Evaluating your child's risk factors for developing caries
- Developing a preventive oral health plan
- Reviewing the health plan with you or your child's caregiver

During the examination, you may be asked to assist by holding your child in your lap or by holding his or her mouth open as the dentist looks inside.

This evaluation is very important to your child's overall health. Therefore, the TDP now covers oral evaluation and counseling for a patient under 3 years of age.* We encourage you to take advantage of this benefit. Taking your infant or toddler for their first dental visit soon after their first tooth erupts will put your child on the right track early for good dental health. ■

* Although dentists recommend that children have their first dental visit around age 1, children are not automatically enrolled in the TDP until the first day of the month following their fourth birthday. However, children under the age of 4 may be voluntarily enrolled at any time, as long as the child is eligible in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS).

Feeling Stressed? Your Teeth May Pay the Price.

Stress can raise your blood pressure, disturb your sleep and also cause digestive problems, but did you know that stress can also affect your teeth? Tooth grinding and clenching, also known as "bruxism," is a common reaction to stress and can lead to headaches, earaches, facial or jaw pain and Temporomandibular Joint Dysfunction (TMD).

It is possible to suffer from bruxism and not know it. Tooth grinding and clenching frequently occur during sleep. For some, the sound produced by grinding is quite loud and may disturb their sleep partners, while others make no sound at all. Generally, the dentist is the first to detect this condition as the bruxing often produces unusual wear spots on the teeth.

If left untreated, bruxism can cause damage or inflammation in the temporomandibular joints that connect to the lower jaw. Over time, cracked or fractured teeth may result from the pressure created by clenching and grinding. Additionally, the enamel may begin to wear away, exposing the underlying tooth layer called dentin. If this occurs, the teeth may become sensitive.

So how can you protect your teeth from the damage that bruxism creates? Visit your dentist regularly! If necessary, he or she may recommend wearing an occlusal guard (an appliance that fits over the teeth) to prevent further damage from clenching and grinding.

Note: The TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) covers occlusal guards for treatment of bruxism. However, the TDP **does not** cover occlusal guards for treatment of TMD. It is important to treat bruxism before it affects these joints.

If you think stress may be the cause of your bruxism, try incorporating some stress-reducing habits into your daily routine. The American Dental Association® suggests trying one or more of the following to alleviate stress:

- Listen to music.
- Read a book.
- Take a walk (or do another form of exercise).
- Enjoy a warm bath.

There **is** help for people with bruxism, and your teeth **can** be protected. If you think you may be experiencing bruxism, contact your dentist as soon as possible. ■

TDP Monthly Premiums for 2008 Benefit Year

The following table lists the member's portions of the TRICARE Dental Program monthly premiums for the 2008 benefit year (Feb. 1, 2008–Jan. 31, 2009). The new premium amounts will be deducted from your military pay account or billed directly to you. Visit www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com for information regarding payment options. ■

Active Duty		Selected Reserve				Individual Ready Reserve			
Single Premium (one family member)	Family Premium (more than one family member)	Sponsor-Only Premium	Single Premium* (one family member, excluding sponsor)	Family Premium (more than one family member, excluding sponsor)	Sponsor and Family Premium*	Sponsor-Only Premium	Single Premium* (one family member, excluding sponsor)	Family Premium (more than one family member, excluding sponsor)	Sponsor and Family Premium*
\$11.58	\$28.95	\$11.58	\$28.95	\$72.37	\$83.95	\$28.95	\$28.95	\$72.37	\$101.32

* If both the sponsor and a single family member are enrolled, the premium due is the total of the sponsor-only premium and the single premium.

Special Dental Care during Chemotherapy

Making sure you take care of your teeth and gums is an important part of keeping yourself healthy, but it is especially important if you are dealing with a compromised immune system during chemotherapy treatments for cancer.

Chemotherapy can have side effects that negatively impact your dental health. According to the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, different people have different reactions to the chemotherapy drugs used to combat their cancers. Side effects can range from pain in your mouth and gums to dry mouth or infections.

A visit to your dentist to discuss your condition is an important part of your overall cancer treatment. To help prevent serious problems, you should see a dentist at least two weeks before starting your chemotherapy.

Although chemotherapy kills cancer cells, it may also harm the normal cells in your mouth and cause dental problems. If the side effects become too severe—especially if they involve an infection—your doctor may have to scale back or even stop your treatments.

Here are some tips from the National Institutes of Health that may be helpful to you during cancer treatments:

- Keep your mouth moist with a saliva substitute—by drinking water or sucking on ice chips or sugar-free hard candy.
- Brush your teeth, gums and tongue with an extra-soft bristle toothbrush and a fluoride toothpaste after every meal and at bedtime.

- Don't use mouthwashes that contain alcohol.
- To help keep your mouth clean, rinse your mouth several times a day with a solution of 1/4 teaspoon baking soda and 1/8 teaspoon salt in one cup of warm water. Follow with a plain water rinse.
- Call your doctor or nurse when your mouth hurts. ■



TRICARE Dental Health Matters



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TRICARE Dental Program
P.O. Box 69426
Harrisburg, PA 17106-9426

TRICARE Dental Program

An Excellent Value

- Generous coverage
- Superior dental health care
- Decisions are health driven, not insurance driven
- High satisfaction with care
- Low out-of-pocket costs
- Easy access

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TRICARE Dental Health Matters is published by the TRICARE Management Activity. Please provide feedback at www.tricare.mil/evaluations/feedback.



Smiling Toward the Future

Growing up, our parents and dentists always reminded us how important it was to floss, brush twice a day and visit our dentist regularly.

Now that you are an adult it is just as important for you to remember this advice and practice good oral hygiene. Brushing with fluoride toothpaste, flossing, eating a healthy diet and regular visits to your dentist are building blocks of good oral health. If you stick to these guidelines you'll protect your teeth throughout your lifetime.

Our teeth and gums need protection just like the rest of our bodies. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), about 25 percent of adults over age 60 no longer have any natural teeth. Missing

teeth can affect nutrition; a person may avoid fresh fruits and vegetables because they are more difficult to chew.

Here are some tips from the CDC to help you maintain your oral health:

- Drink fluoridated water and use fluoride toothpaste. Fluoride provides protection against tooth decay.
- Careful brushing and flossing reduces plaque and protects against periodontal disease.
- See your dentist on a regular basis.
- Avoid tobacco.
- Limit alcohol.

Also, if you are taking medications that cause dry mouth, ask your doctor if there are other drugs that can be substituted. According to the CDC, more than 400 commonly used

medications can be the cause of dry mouth. Your dentist may recommend sugar-free candy or gum to stimulate saliva flow.

When you visit your dentist you should discuss any health problems or medications you are taking to make sure your treatment is appropriate. See your dentist at the first signs of trouble, including:

- Pain or numbness
- Cavities
- Gums that are tender or swollen
- Difficulty chewing, swallowing, speaking or moving the jaw or tongue

With proper care and attention you can be sure you'll be smiling brightly well into the future. ■