



## The Dentist Is In ...

### Protect Your Smile with Athletic Mouthguards



*COL Jeffrey Chaffin  
Chief, Dental Care Branch  
TRICARE Management Activity*

If you or your child participates in sports or other recreational activities, you know the importance of protective gear. Wearing protective gear is essential for safe play and shielding fragile body parts from severe damage and injuries.

One good way to protect your teeth is by wearing an athletic mouthguard during any activity that could cause harm or

injury to your mouth. The TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) covers enrollees for one custom fitted athletic mouthguard at a 50 percent cost-share, per consecutive 12-month period.

Athletic mouthguards help to prevent broken and chipped teeth, cuts to the tongue and inside the mouth, and even possible nerve damage and tooth loss during some activities. Using an athletic mouthguard may also reduce the rate and severity of concussions, according to the American Dental Association® (ADA). Athletic mouthguards absorb some of the shock experienced from a blow to the head and help to distribute it evenly.

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## Taking Care of Your Lips

The condition of your lips is a key component to a healthy smile. Your lips require care and attention, just like your teeth. Lips have the thinnest outer layer of skin and few oil-producing glands, making them especially vulnerable to dryness.

Prolonged sun exposure dries out your lips and increases your risk of skin cancer and premature aging. On sunny days, be sure to apply a water-resistant lip balm with SPF to protect your lips from sun damage throughout the day. Try to avoid licking your lips too much, because saliva evaporates quickly and causes lips to dry. Additionally, lip pursing can cause premature wrinkles around the mouth, which is one more reason not to smoke.

The environment can also damage your lips. Exposure to pollution or extreme weather conditions can damage unprotected lips. If your lips are extra dry and chapped,



gently exfoliate them with a soft toothbrush. Drinking plenty of water will keep your lips hydrated, and you can apply a moisturizer for additional protection. ■



## TRICARE Dental Premium Rates

The following tables list your TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) monthly premium rates, which will continue through April 30, 2012. The premium amounts will be deducted from your military pay account or billed directly to you. Visit the TDP Web site at [www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com](http://www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com) for information regarding payment options. ■

### Active Duty

Single Premium (one family member)	Family Premium (more than one family member)
\$12.69	\$31.72

### Selected Reserve

Sponsor-Only Premium	Single Premium <sup>1</sup> (one family member, excluding sponsor)	Family Premium (more than one family member, excluding sponsor)	Sponsor and Family Premium
\$12.69	\$31.72	\$79.29	\$91.98

### Individual Ready Reserve

Sponsor-Only Premium	Single Premium <sup>1</sup> (one family member, excluding sponsor)	Family Premium (more than one family member, excluding sponsor)	Sponsor and Family Premium
\$31.72	\$31.72	\$79.29	\$111.01

1. 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.

## Dental Care During Your Pregnancy

During your pregnancy, it is important to maintain good oral health because you could be at increased risk for dental disease. When you first become pregnant or if you are thinking about becoming pregnant, schedule a dental checkup. You should also consider having more frequent dental cleanings during your pregnancy, especially if you are noticing signs of plaque buildup, red and puffy gums or bleeding after brushing and flossing.

Brush and floss after every meal—including snacks—and choose nutritious alternatives to sugar-rich foods that lead to tooth decay. Because your baby’s teeth begin to develop between the third and sixth month of pregnancy, it is important that you receive sufficient amounts of nutrients, especially calcium, protein, phosphorous and vitamins A, C and D.

### TRICARE Dental Program Covers Extra Dental Cleaning

The TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) allows pregnant women to have a third routine dental cleaning in a consecutive 12-month period at no extra cost when provided by a participating provider. If you are expecting, take advantage of the extra dental cleaning during your pregnancy. Before submitting your claim, please ask your dentist to note your pregnancy on the claim form. For more information, visit the TDP Web site at [www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com](http://www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com). ■

# Dental Hygiene for Babies and Toddlers

**Y**ou should schedule your baby's first dental check-up before his or her first birthday, but the first dental visit can be as early as when your child gets a first tooth.

## Prevent Tooth Decay

Dental problems can begin as soon as your child gets his or her first tooth. For example, a condition commonly known as baby bottle tooth decay, can result from putting your baby to bed with a bottle or from nighttime nursing.

Here are some tips to avoid childhood tooth decay:

- Don't put your children to bed with a bottle.
- Avoid nighttime nursing after your baby's first tooth erupts.
- Avoid putting juice in your baby's bottle.
- Encourage your child to drink from a cup as he or she approaches his or her first birthday.

## Take Care of Baby Teeth

It is important to take good care of your child's primary teeth, or baby teeth, until they are replaced by permanent teeth. Baby teeth not only help your child chew food, but also play an important role in speech development and save space for permanent teeth to grow in properly.

Before your baby's first tooth comes in, practice good dental habits at home by cleaning the gums with a soft infant toothbrush or soft washcloth and water. Ask your dentist when you should start using fluoridated toothpaste on your baby's teeth.

## Monitor Thumb Sucking

Most children will stop thumb and finger sucking by age two. If they don't stop on their own, you should encourage them to stop, especially after age 4. Prolonged thumb or finger sucking can result in crowded or crooked teeth or bite problems. Ask your dentist or physician for tips to help your child stop the habit. While thumb, finger and pacifier sucking may all affect your child's teeth the same way, a pacifier habit may be easier to break than the others.



## Prevention is the Key

Prevention is the key to a healthy smile. For more information or to locate a dentist, visit the TRICARE Dental Program Web site at [www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com](http://www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com). ■

## Healthy Smiles For Your Children

**P**racticing proper dental habits with your children at a young age will reinforce healthy habits into adulthood. Children need healthy teeth to help chew food and speak clearly.

When permanent teeth appear, children should begin flossing each night before bed. The American Dental Association® recommends visiting the dentist for check-ups and cleanings every six months. Proper brushing and flossing and limiting sugary foods will keep teeth clean and help prevent cavities.

Encourage your children to wear a protective mouthguard while playing sports; athletic mouthguards are covered by the TRICARE Dental Program (TDP), but are limited to one per consecutive 12-month period. Teach your child what to do if he or she breaks or loses a tooth. If action is taken quickly, broken or damaged teeth can often be saved. Information on what to do in emergency dental situations is available in the dental health center on the TDP Web site at [www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com](http://www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com).

Take time to talk about a healthy oral care routine with your children. Promoting good oral care habits—brushing, flossing, and regular visits to the dentist—while children are young can help them have healthy teeth for life. Children enrolled in the TDP are covered for two routine dental examinations per consecutive 12-month period. In certain circumstances a third routine examination is also covered if provided by a different office.

Visit [www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com](http://www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com) for more information about the TDP and children's dental care or to find a dentist. ■



## Tooth Sensitivity

**I**f it is painful for you to eat or drink hot, cold, sweet or very acidic foods and drinks, you may have tooth sensitivity. Tooth sensitivity occurs when the layer under your tooth enamel is exposed. When the enamel is worn down or the gums have receded, you may feel sharp, sudden pain in your teeth.

Causes of tooth sensitivity include, but are not limited to:

- Poor brushing habits
- Receding gums
- Gum disease

- Cracked teeth
- Teeth grinding
- Plaque buildup

Your dentist will properly diagnose your sensitivity and recommend the proper treatment. In the meantime, the following habits may help:

- Use a soft-bristled toothbrush
- Use a desensitizing toothpaste
- Avoid acidic foods
- Use fluoridated dental products ■

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According to the ADA, an athlete is 60 times more likely to experience injury to the teeth or mouth when not wearing an athletic mouthguard. Even in non-contact sports like gymnastics and biking, athletic mouthguards are shown to help prevent injuries.

There are several types of athletic mouthguards available. Many stores sell pre-formed and “boil and bite” mouthguards that are not covered by the TDP. These are generally a less-expensive option than having your dentist custom-fit a piece for you; however, they will most likely not fit as well and may be uncomfortable to wear.

Your athletic mouthguard should fit comfortably and not restrict your breathing or speech. It should be easy to clean and made of a resilient, tear-resistant material. Visit your TDP-participating dentist and talk about the best option for you and your children.

Athletic mouthguards are easy to care for and should be taken care of properly. Make sure you clean your mouthguard after each use, either by brushing with a toothbrush and toothpaste or by washing with cool, soapy water and rinsing with clean water. You should regularly wash your mouthguard with soap and water and carry it in a sturdy, well-vented container. Don't leave the piece in the sun because extreme heat can affect the shape and fit of your mouthpiece. Finally, take your mouthguard to each dentist appointment so that your dentist can check for proper fit and damage or wear. Your dentist can answer any questions you might have about use or care.



Visit [www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com](http://www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com) for more information on mouthguards, cost-shares and other benefits and to find a TDP participating dentist near you. ■

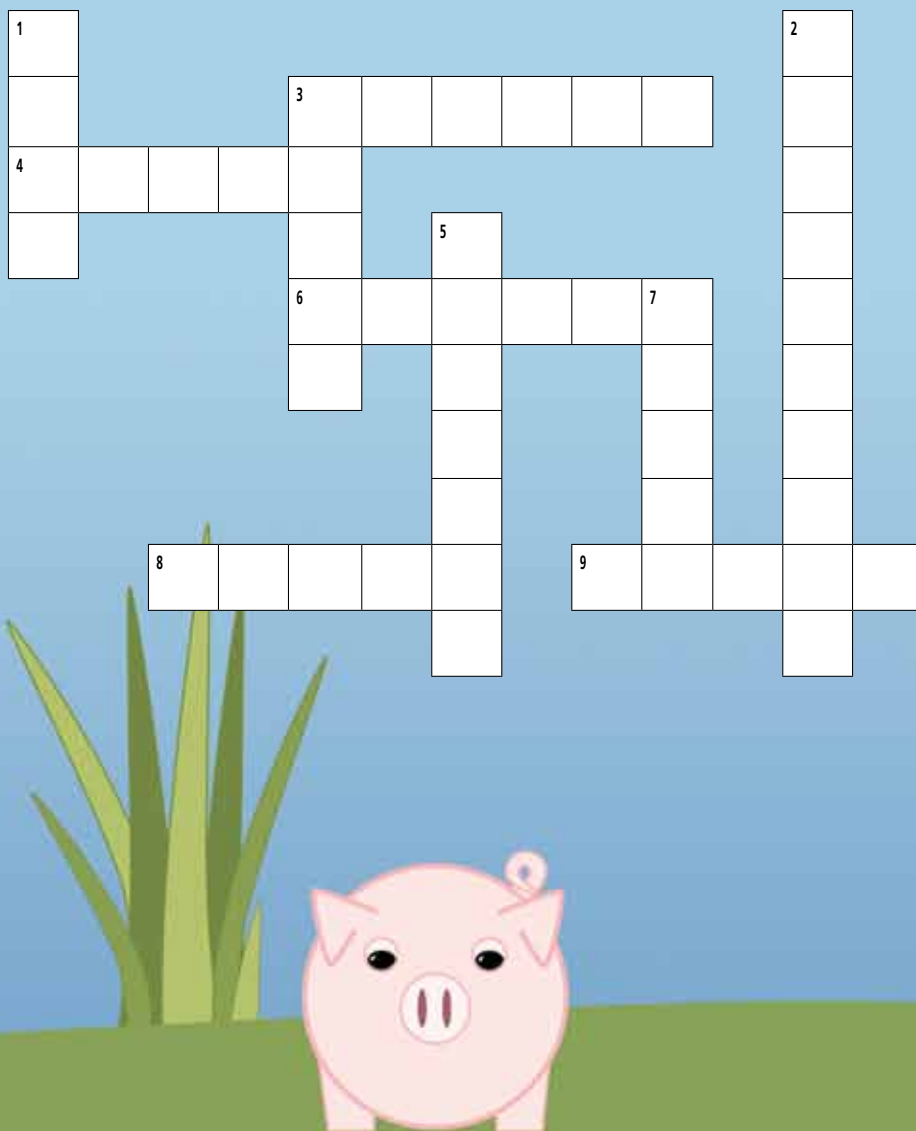
## Caring for Your Toothbrush

**F**ollow these simple steps to extend the life of your toothbrush:

- Replace your toothbrush every 3 to 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; air drying helps kill bacteria.
- Store your toothbrush upright so it can drain and air dry faster. If you keep it in a cup with other toothbrushes, don't allow the toothbrushes to touch each other.
- Don't share toothbrushes.
- Avoid placing your toothbrush in a small container for long periods of time. Moisture can easily build up, creating an environment for bacteria to grow. While traveling, allow your toothbrush to air dry completely before storing it.
- Keep your toothbrush away from the toilet. Because germs may go airborne when you flush, always keep the toilet lid down. ■



## Crossword!



### ACROSS

3. Brushing your teeth will help you keep fresh \_\_\_\_\_.
4. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a large, flat tooth that helps you grind your food when you chew.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ are sugary foods that can cause tooth decay.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ is a strong thread that you can use to clean between your teeth.
9. Your \_\_\_\_\_ are what allow you to chew and to smile.

### DOWN

1. The soft pink tissue on the bottom or top of your teeth is called \_\_\_\_\_.
2. You spread a small amount of \_\_\_\_\_ on your toothbrush before brushing.
3. You should \_\_\_\_\_ your teeth at least twice everyday to keep them clean and healthy.
5. Visit the \_\_\_\_\_ every six months to have your teeth cleaned.
7. Your dentist can help you keep a healthy \_\_\_\_\_.



# TRICARE<sup>®</sup> Dental Health Matters



United Concordia  
TRICARE Dental Program  
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## 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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## Calcium and Oral Health

Calcium is necessary for the development of strong bones and healthy teeth, especially in children. For adults, eating calcium-rich foods also helps prevent osteoporosis. Drinking milk regularly can help most people easily meet their daily calcium needs, and there are other sources of calcium available.

### Where Else Can I Get Calcium?

- Calcium-fortified juices
- Yogurt
- Dark green, leafy vegetables
- Cheese
- Calcium-fortified soy milk
- Calcium-fortified breads and cereals
- Pudding

### How Much Calcium Do I Need? How Much Does My Child Need?

In general, children ages 4–8 need about 800 mg of calcium, or three eight-ounce glasses of milk daily. Children and teens ages 9–18 need about 1,300 mg, or four glasses of milk per day, and adults need about 1,000 mg of calcium, or three to four glasses daily.<sup>1</sup> Talk to your doctor and your child's pediatrician to ensure that you and your child are receiving enough calcium.

### What Should I Avoid?

Caffeine, alcohol and tobacco can cause you to lose calcium. Avoiding these items will also help prevent tooth decay and gum problems. ■

*1. American Academy of Pediatrics, 2006.*