

# TRICARE Dental Health Matters



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A PUBLICATION FOR TRICARE DENTAL PROGRAM ENROLLEES

## Wise Words about Your Wisdom Teeth

**W**isdom teeth are the last permanent teeth to come in (usually between ages 17 and 25) and often times the first to come out. Wisdom teeth are another set of back molars and can be an asset to chewing and biting when they're properly positioned in the mouth. Frequently, these teeth are removed by a dentist or oral surgeon shortly after their arrival. So how do you know whether to keep those wisdom teeth or lose them?

The good news is, when you're under the regular care of a dentist, you won't have to make the decision alone. Your dentist will monitor the eruption of your wisdom teeth through X-rays and oral exams and talk to you about whether they need to be removed or not.

There are many reasons dentists and oral surgeons extract wisdom teeth. Many times there isn't enough room along the jaw for these teeth, causing them to grow in sideways or to become impacted (trapped in the gum and bone). When wisdom teeth do come in, they are often troublesome because they're located so far back in the mouth and are difficult to reach for cleaning and flossing.

According to the American Dental Association, dentists will usually recommend extraction of wisdom teeth when:

- Wisdom teeth erupt only partially, leaving an opening where bacteria can settle and cause infection. Pain, swelling, jaw stiffness and general illness can result.
- Poorly aligned wisdom teeth might damage or cause infections in adjacent teeth.
- A cyst (fluid-filled sac) forms, destroying surrounding structures such as bone or tooth roots.

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## The Dentist is in ...

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

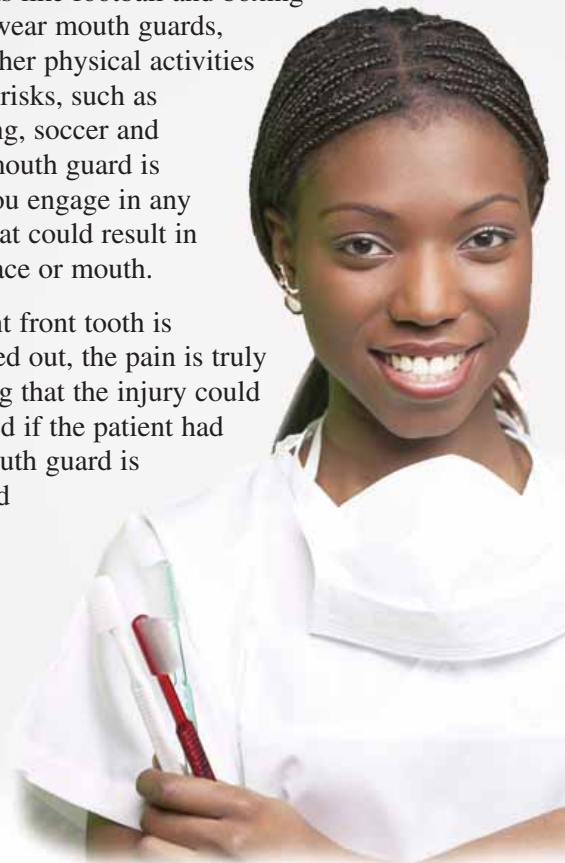
**B**rushing and flossing daily and visiting the dentist for check-ups twice a year are important parts of proper dental care. Using a mouth guard to protect your teeth from an accidental injury is an equally important precaution to safeguard your bright smile.

"We invest a lot of time and money into caring for our teeth. However, we frequently forget to take the necessary precautions to protect our teeth from potential damage or injury," said Dr. Gary Martin, an Air Force Colonel, dentist and TRICARE Dental Care Division director.

While certain sports like football and boxing require players to wear mouth guards, there are several other physical activities that have potential risks, such as basketball, wrestling, soccer and skateboarding. A mouth guard is recommended if you engage in any physical activity that could result in an injury to your face or mouth.

"When a permanent front tooth is fractured or knocked out, the pain is truly felt by all. Knowing that the injury could have been prevented if the patient had been wearing a mouth guard is heartbreaking," said Dr. Martin.

*continued on page 2*



## The Dentist is in ...

*continued from page 1*

In many cases, dental injuries can be reduced or prevented by wearing a mouth guard. If you are involved with any contact sport or physical activity where there is a risk of injury to your teeth or jaw, it is advised that you get a mouth guard. Three types of mouth guards are available:

Mouth guard	Description	Pros	Cons
<b>Stock</b>	Pre-formed	Least expensive	Often don't fit well making it difficult to talk and breathe normally
<b>Boil and Bite</b>	Just soften in hot water and bite for shape	Better fit	Follow the directions carefully or it may not fit
<b>Custom-fit</b>	Made by your dentist with an impression of your teeth	Perfect fit and excellent protection	Most expensive option

“For the best protection and fit, I recommend the custom mouth guard,” said Dr. Martin. “Especially if you consider the investment you have made in dental treatments such as braces, or what you may spend for the restorative treatment following an injury.”

Discuss which option is best with your TRICARE Dental Program participating dentist. It is also good to know that the TRICARE Dental Program covers one custom mouth guard every 12 months with a 50 percent member cost-share. Mouth guards for treatment of

Temporomandibular Joint Dysfunction are not a covered benefit. Refer to page 51 of your TRICARE Dental Program Benefit Booklet for more information.

If an accident occurs and a tooth is knocked out, gently rinse the root of the tooth in water without removing attached tissue fragments. If possible, insert the tooth back in its socket. If insertion is not possible, place the tooth in a cup of milk. Take the tooth and go directly to the dentist's office or the emergency room.

“The sooner you get treatment, the more likely that your dentist will be able to save the tooth,” concluded Dr. Martin. ■

### Mouth Guard Care Tips

- Brush your mouth guard after each use with a toothbrush and toothpaste.
- Regularly rinse your mouth guard in cool soapy water, followed by clean water.
- Carry your mouth guard in a sturdy, vented container.
- Take your mouth guard to your dental appointments so your dentist can check for proper fit and wear.
- Be sure you don't leave your mouth guard in the sun as it may lose its shape.

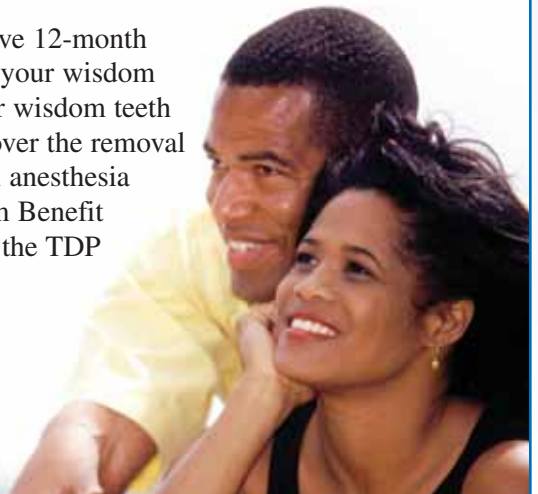
## Wise Words about Your Wisdom Teeth

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If your dentist recommends removing the wisdom teeth, he or she may refer you to an oral surgeon.

The TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) covers checkups twice in a consecutive 12-month period, during which time your dentist will check the position and health of your wisdom teeth. The TDP also covers X-rays which help your dentist determine if your wisdom teeth are fully erupted or impacted by bone and gum. In addition, the TDP will cover the removal of impacted wisdom teeth for patients aged 15 through 30 as well as general anesthesia for the procedure. Please refer to page 20 of your TRICARE Dental Program Benefit Booklet for the cost-share based on the sponsor's pay grade. It is located on the TDP Web site at [www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com](http://www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com).

If you are younger than 15 or older than 30 and your dentist recommends removal of your wisdom teeth, your dentist will have to send X-rays and documentation of medical necessity to United Concordia for the procedure to be considered for coverage. ■



## What Your Mouth Says about Your Health

**Y**our mouth can say a lot about the overall health of your body. Your dentist may be able to tell if you use tobacco, lack nutrition in your diet, or grind your teeth from high stress just by looking in your mouth. Today, researchers are finding evidence that links gum disease to more serious health risks such as stroke, heart disease and preterm low weight babies.

Gingivitis, the mildest form of gum disease usually caused by inadequate hygiene, causes the gums to swell and bleed. If not treated, gingivitis can progress to periodontitis, the advanced form of gum disease that can result in the loss of teeth. According to the American Academy of Periodontology, researchers believe that periodontal bacteria can enter the blood stream, travel to major organs and begin new infections, thereby contributing to the development of serious health problems in other places in the body.

Researchers aren't clear on the exact relationship between periodontitis and these health problems. And, just because you have periodontitis doesn't mean you have heart disease. However, taking care of your mouth and preventing gum disease has never been more important.

The American Dental Association recommends these ways to keep your mouth and your body healthy:

- Take care of your teeth and gums daily. This means brushing thoroughly twice a day and flossing once a day.
- Eat a balanced, healthy diet and avoid snacking on foods high in sugar.
- Visit your dentist regularly for checkups and talk to him or her about significant changes in your mouth or in your overall health. Keep your dentist updated on the medications you take, both over-the-counter and prescription medications.
- Examine your teeth and gums often and notify your dentist if you notice anything that concerns you. (See examination article on page 4.)
- Pregnant women should take particular care of their teeth and gums because the rise in hormone levels can aggravate existing dental problems. ■

## Feel Like Having a Snack? Tips on Making a Healthy Choice

**S**nacking is a great way to satisfy hunger pangs between meals and to keep your energy up. However, it is important to consider your teeth when choosing a snack. Choosing fresh, low-sugar or no-sugar foods are the best snack options for your teeth and your overall health.

Many snack items contain a lot of sugar, such as regular soda, candy and cookies.

Sugary foods are not the best option because the sugar helps the bad bacteria in your mouth grow, which can increase the chance of tooth decay. Additionally, sugary foods are not a healthy option for your body because they are basically "empty calories." This means that even though they taste good, you really are not getting any nutritional value from them. Typically, you eat more sugary foods because you are not feeling satisfied or nourished.

The next time you get the urge to snack, instead of picking up a candy bar, think about eating some carrot sticks or an apple. You will feel more satisfied and you will be doing your teeth a favor.

For a healthy snack, consider trying one of these satisfying options:

- Apples
- Baked tortilla chips
- Broccoli
- Canned fruits in natural juices
- Carrot sticks
- Celery
- Cucumbers
- Grapefruit
- Low-salt pretzels
- Nuts
- Oranges
- Strawberries
- Sunflower seeds
- Tomatoes
- Unbuttered popcorn
- Unsweetened fruit and vegetable juices

It is important to brush twice a day and floss once a day. And remember to see your dentist for professional check-ups and cleanings every six months! ■



# National Guard and Reserve Dental Health Matters

**K**eeping yourself in tip-top condition is important if you are a member of the National Guard or Reserve and a key part of that is maintaining your oral health. Poor oral health can be a danger to you during deployments where you may not have ready access to dental care. Studies have shown if you deploy with dental care needs, there is an increased risk of you having a dental emergency. To assist you in obtaining oral health, the TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) and its participating dentists are standing by and ready to help.

## Dental Health Duties

To be fit for duty, you are required to receive annual dental examinations and report the results to your service. Department of Defense (DoD) Health Affairs Policy No. 01-025 requires the uniformed services to ensure all members of the National Guard and Reserve undergo an annual dental examination.

The DD Form 2813, *DoD Active Duty/Reserve Forces Dental Examination*, is used to assist TDP-enrolled National Guard and Reserve forces in documenting their dental health and can be downloaded at [www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com](http://www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com). If you receive care from a civilian dentist under the TDP, you can provide your dentist with the DD Form 2813 to document your dental condition. Dentists participating in the program will complete the form at no additional cost for TDP-enrolled National Guard or Reserve sponsors.



## Affordable Care

The TDP is a great option for members of the National Guard and Reserve who don't have other dental insurance. The program can also be used to augment any private dental insurance you already have.

As a National Guard or Reserve sponsor (Selected Reserve and Individual Ready Reserve—Special Mobilization Category), the current monthly TDP premium is just \$11.05. It's just \$27.63 for Individual Ready Reserve sponsors.

If you are a National Guard or Reserve sponsor, the TDP provides continuous dental coverage for you and your family as you move through periods of activation and deactivation. When you are not on active duty, the current premium for one family member is \$27.63, and \$69.07 for families with more than one enrolled. These monthly family premiums are in addition to the TDP-enrolled sponsor's monthly premium, as noted in the preceding paragraph.

If you are activated for more than 30 days, you will automatically be disenrolled from the program but automatically reenrolled when you are deactivated. For your family, the only difference is that when you are activated for more than 30 days, they become "active duty family members" and pay a reduced monthly premium.

For more information regarding TDP benefits and policies for the National Guard and Reserve, please visit the United Concordia Companies, Inc., Web site at [www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com](http://www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com) and click on "Search Here" in the green bar at the top of the page. ■

## Examine Your Teeth and Gums

**E**very year, more and more evidence points to periodontitis, the severe form of gum disease, as an indicator for more serious health problems such as stroke and heart disease. The good news is that periodontitis can be avoided if gum disease is recognized and treated early.

The best way to do this is to visit the dentist regularly. Regular cleanings remove plaque buildup before it can cause gum problems. Between checkups, look in the mirror and carefully examine your teeth and gums—and contact your dentist immediately if you think there is a problem.

Several warning signs that can signal a problem include:

- Gums that bleed easily
- Red, swollen, tender gums
- Gums that have pulled away from the teeth
- Persistent bad breath or bad taste
- Permanent teeth that are loose or separating
- Any change in the way your teeth fit together when you bite
- Any change in the fit of partial dentures ■

# TDP Costs and Coverage Overview

The TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) covers many different services to help you maintain your oral health. What you pay for these services—from oral exams and X-rays to fillings and implants—can vary depending on your pay grade and if you are stationed overseas.

The cost-share is the portion of the TDP’s allowable charge that is your responsibility. Your cost-shares are indicated on the dental explanation of benefits (that is mailed to you) describing the services you received from your dentist.

It is also important to note that the costs may vary depending on whether your dentist is a TDP participating, or a non-participating dentist.

Services with No Cost-share	Cost-shares in CONUS	Costs-shares in OCONUS
<p>Diagnostic, preventive and palliative emergency treatment services are covered 100 percent. There is no cost-share to you no matter what your pay grade if you use a participating TDP dentist in the Continental United States (CONUS) or a government-approved dentist outside the Continental United States (OCONUS).</p> <p>Diagnostic services include two oral evaluations by your dentist during each 12-month period, and the various types of X-rays they take of your teeth. A third oral evaluation is covered by the TDP if it is done by a different dentist.</p> <p>Cleanings and fluoride treatments are two examples of preventive services available to you without a cost-share. The TDP provides two routine cleanings and two fluoride applications in consecutive 12-month periods.</p> <p>Dental emergencies are, by their nature, unexpected occurrences and you are covered by the TDP if you need to visit a dentist for relief from pain.</p>	<p>All other services covered by the TDP require you to pay a cost-share if you are stationed in CONUS. The part you pay of the allowable charge for these services ranges from 20 percent for sealants and fillings to 50 percent for crowns, implants and dentures.</p> <p>Three types of services have reduced cost-shares for service members in pay grades E-1 through E-4. These services are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Endodontic (i.e. root canals)</li> <li>• Periodontic</li> <li>• Oral surgery</li> </ul> <p>Enrollees in these pay grades pay a 30 percent cost-share for these services instead of the 40 percent cost-share paid by all other service members.</p>	<p>Unlike in the CONUS service area, cost-shares overseas are the same regardless of your pay grade. Several of the dental service categories that require you to pay a cost-share in CONUS, do not have a cost-share overseas.</p> <p>These categories are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sealants</li> <li>• Basic restorative</li> <li>• Endodontic</li> <li>• Periodontic</li> <li>• Oral surgery</li> <li>• General anesthesia</li> <li>• Intravenous sedation</li> <li>• Consultation/Office visit</li> <li>• Post-surgical services</li> <li>• Miscellaneous services</li> </ul> <p>If you are an active duty family member or a member of the Selected Reserve and Individual Ready Reserve (Special Mobilization Category), you will pay a 50 percent cost-share for orthodontic, implant, prosthodontic and other restorative services.</p>
<h3>Cost-shares and Non-participating Dentists</h3>		
<p>If dental services are performed by a non-participating dentist, you will be responsible for the difference between United Concordia’s allowance and the dentist’s fee. This is in addition to any applicable cost-share. You can reduce your out-of-pocket expenses by receiving care from a participating TDP network dentist.</p>		

## Annual and Lifetime Maximums

Your annual and lifetime maximum benefit is the same in both CONUS and OCONUS.

Each TDP enrollee has a \$1,200 per contract year (Feb. 1 to Jan. 31) annual maximum. Enrolled members eligible for orthodontic services have a \$1,500 lifetime orthodontic benefit.

**Note:** For additional information on orthodontic eligibility, cost-shares and services, please refer to your TRICARE Dental Program Benefit Booklet or the TRICARE Dental Program Web site at [www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com](http://www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com). ■

# U.S. Surgeon General's Seven Steps to a Bright Smile

Former U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Richard H. Carmona outlined seven steps to good oral health habits for children in his 2003 report “A National Call to Action to Promote Oral Health.” The former Surgeon General’s tips are now part of a comprehensive campaign launched by Colgate’s Bright Smiles, Bright Futures® program to provide free dental screenings, treatment referrals and oral health education to 100 million children by the year 2010.

The seven steps are:	
1	Brush teeth and gums with fluoride toothpaste at least twice a day, especially after eating breakfast and before bedtime.
2	Visit the dentist regularly.
3	Floss your teeth daily.
4	Use fluoride rinse for strong, healthy teeth and gums.
5	Limit the number of times you eat snacks each day and remember to practice healthy eating and get plenty of calcium.
6	Wear a mouth guard when playing sports.
7	Ask your dental professional about dental sealants.

As parents, you can do your part to promote children’s dental health by making sure your kids follow these seven steps. Many of the steps are daily routines—such as flossing and using fluoride rinse—that when followed can dramatically impact a child’s oral health, today and in the future. You can also affect your child’s dental health by understanding your TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) coverage and taking advantage of the benefits offered.

For example, visiting the dentist regularly topped the Surgeon General’s list, and the TDP covers two routine cleaning visits in a consecutive 12-month period. Sealants, another item on the list, are covered by the program. The TDP covers one sealant per tooth in a three-year period on permanent molars for children through age 18. The molars must be free of “caries” or decay, and must not have had any previous restoration. Sealants have a 20 percent cost-share.

### Why did regular dental visits and sealants make the list?

#### Because:

- Regular cleanings remove plaque buildup and help to prevent cavities.
- Discovering and filling cavities early can prevent more serious dental problems such as root canals.
- Sealants (plastic coatings) help to prevent cavities in the back teeth, which are harder to clean.\*

\* Not all children need sealants. Consult your dentist regarding sealant necessity. ■

## Which Toothbrush is the Best?

With so many choices out there, how do you know which type of toothbrush is best for your teeth?

### Soft Bristles versus Hard Bristles

Most dentists recommend a toothbrush with soft nylon bristles and rounded tips. The soft nylon gives the bristles just the right amount of flex, while the rounded tips reach gently in to the groove between the gums and teeth without damaging any tissue.

Some people feel that their teeth get cleaner with hard bristles—the harder they scrub, the cleaner their teeth become. In some instances, a hard brush may work best when you have significant dental needs, as long as you use it properly. However, research shows that using a hard toothbrush can scrape away tooth enamel and cause gum abrasions, especially when used over time. That being said, a hard-bristle toothbrush is not the best choice for your teeth.

### Manual versus Electric or Battery-operated

Electric and battery-operated toothbrushes offer advantages over manual toothbrushes. Powered toothbrushes are more effective at removing plaque and reducing gingivitis than manual ones. They not only move bristles at a much faster speed than you could possibly achieve manually, but they also remove plaque more evenly in hard-to-reach places, such as in-between teeth and on back molars.

A powered toothbrush can make dental care easier for people with arthritis or dexterity problems. Plus, powered toothbrushes are fun for kids and adults who like “gadgets.” People who use them tend to brush longer or more often.

### Bottom Line

The most important thing is to brush properly for two minutes, at least twice a day and floss between brushing, regardless of the type of brush you use. And remember to change your brush every three months, after you’ve been sick, or when the bristles become frayed. ■

## Caring for Your Teeth and Braces

If you have braces on your teeth, you are probably looking forward to the day when they come off and beautiful, straight teeth are revealed. But did you know that how you take care of your teeth with braces affects what your teeth will look like without them?

Brushing and flossing correctly is one of the most important things you can do. It can be uncomfortable, challenging and time consuming to brush and floss around those tiny brackets, wires and bands. However, it's especially important if you do wear braces, to practice effective brushing and flossing techniques to prevent stains, discoloration and plaque-causing bacteria from forming.

You should try to brush after every meal as food particles tend to get lodged between brackets and arch wires. If this isn't possible, try rinsing your mouth with water.

### How to clean your teeth and braces:

- Use a dry toothbrush (soft bristles only) with a small amount of toothpaste.
- Use a circular, massaging motion around the gum lines—spend about 10 seconds on each tooth.
- Brush slowly, and carefully, making sure you brush each tooth and top and bottom of the arch wire.
- Brush lower teeth up and the upper teeth down. Don't forget to brush the roof of your mouth and your tongue, too.
- Carefully pull unwaxed floss between wire and tooth. A floss threader can be helpful.
- Floss gently around the braces.
- Floss between teeth up to the gum line, ensuring that the floss is pulled against the tooth using a scrubbing motion.
- Floss carefully around each tooth.

Ask your orthodontist about using a proxabrush (also known as a “Christmas tree” brush) that is specially designed for cleaning between braces. Your orthodontist may also recommend using a fluoride mouthwash that can reach places your toothbrush can't.

It is also important to eat a healthy balanced diet and avoid certain foods that could potentially damage your braces. Eating foods that are hard, sticky or chewy can bend and loosen brackets and arch wires, which will require additional visits for repairs—potentially lengthening the duration of your orthodontic treatment.

### Some foods to avoid when you have braces:

- Beef jerky
- Candy bars
- Caramel
- Celery
- Chewing gum
- Corn chips
- Crisp taco shells
- Hard candy
- Nuts
- Sodas
- Taffy
- Whole apples

If you're involved in sports or other physical activity, please wear a mouth guard to protect your teeth and braces. For more information about mouth guards, refer to “The Dentist is in” article on page 1 of this *TRICARE Dental Health Matters* newsletter.

Keep in mind that any time your wires, bands or brackets are loose or broken; you should call the orthodontist as soon as possible. You will be advised if you need to make an emergency appointment, or if the repair can wait until your next scheduled adjustment. ■

## Is It a Canker Sore or Fever Blister?

Canker sores and fever blisters can occur frequently. But how do you tell them apart?

### Canker Sore

A canker sore, also called an aphthous ulcer appears as a small, white lump with a red border on the inside of the mouth. While the specific cause is unknown, several factors can increase the chance of canker sores, such as allergies, minor injury, such as biting the inside of the mouth or reactions from hot or spicy foods.

### Fever Blister

A fever blister, also called a cold sore is a small, fluid-filled blister on a raised, red, painful area of the skin, usually appearing on the edge of the lips. Pain, itching or tingling in the area usually occurs prior to the appearance of the blisters. Fever blisters are caused by the herpes simplex virus and may appear following a fever, sunburn, or periods of high emotional stress. ■

*continued on page 8*

## Is It a Canker Sore or Fever Blister?

*continued from page 7*

### Main Differences

The main differences between a canker sore and a fever blister are:

- Fever blisters occur on the outside of the mouth, while canker sores appear on the inside of the mouth.
- Fever blisters are contagious, canker sores are not contagious.

### Treatment

Canker sores usually do not need treatment and generally heal on their own after a week or two. There are several over-the-counter topical anesthetics and antimicrobial rinses that may help ease the discomfort. Avoiding hot, spicy foods that may irritate the infected area may also help.

Fever blisters can be quite painful and can spread. Once infected with primary herpes, the virus stays in the body and causes sporadic outbreaks. Many people have the virus, but do not experience a blister outbreak.

Fever blisters are contagious. You can get them from another person who has an active lesion. Avoid sharing eating utensils, razors and towels, which may spread the infection.

Fever blisters usually heal in a week to 10 days on their own. Over-the-counter topical anesthetics can provide some relief. Your doctor may prescribe antiviral drugs if you experience frequent outbreaks. You should see your doctor if your symptoms are severe, the outbreak lasts more than two weeks or you develop irritation in your eyes. ■

## Emergency Dental Care

**N**o matter how hard you try—brushing and flossing every day and visiting your dentist regularly—sometimes there's nothing you can do to prevent a dental emergency.

But when an emergency does happen—a toothache or a broken tooth for instance—the TRICARE Dental Program is ready with coverage for the unexpected.

### What is the TDP Dental Emergency Benefit?

The TRICARE Dental Program's emergency benefit is there so you can find relief in time of need. This is referred to as palliative emergency treatment. Palliative emergency treatment is covered on a per-visit basis, and you will not have a cost-share for this treatment.

To be considered palliative emergency treatment, the problem you experience has to occur suddenly and unexpectedly and must require immediate attention.

Your dentist must provide treatment to ease your symptoms.

Palliative emergency treatment is covered when no definitive care is provided. When a definitive procedure, such as replacing a filling, is reported on the same day as the emergency treatment, the emergency treatment will be considered part of the definitive procedure.

However, if your emergency involves a trip to the emergency room and treatment by a physician, this is not covered by the TRICARE Dental Program. You should check with your TRICARE regional medical contractor about adjunctive dental care coverage in situations like these.

### Other Covered Emergency Services

If you only receive an evaluation of your condition before your dentist refers you elsewhere for treatment and/or prescribes medication, the service is considered a limited oral evaluation. Like palliative emergency

treatment, limited oral evaluations are a covered benefit and there is no cost-share. Prescriptions are not covered by the TRICARE Dental Program.

In some emergency situations, your dentist may provide a specific procedure to treat your problem, such as the extraction of a problem tooth. In circumstances like these, the actual procedure would be considered for payment and applicable cost-shares will apply.

The TRICARE Dental Program also covers after-hours office visits if you need to see your dentist after their regular office hours. A 20-percent cost-share applies to these after-hours office visits.

Just call 1-800-866-8499 if you need more information about emergency care benefits and the associated cost-shares. Your TRICARE Dental Program Benefit Booklet also lists all covered emergency and routine procedures. You can view it online at [www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com](http://www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com). ■

## Refresher Course in Flossing

**A**long with brushing twice a day, you should consider flossing at least once a day to help keep your teeth and gums in healthy condition.

Flossing is important because your toothbrush can't easily reach in-between your teeth or under your gum line to get rid of the plaque. If you allow the plaque to build up in these spots, this can lead to tooth decay and gum disease. In fact, the Surgeon General recommends that you floss your teeth daily to keep your teeth and gums healthy.

### **In addition to removing plaque, flossing also helps to:**

- remove debris that adheres to teeth and gums in between teeth
- polish tooth surfaces
- control bad breath

**According to the American Dental Association, the correct way to floss is as follows:**

- Break off about 18 inches of floss and wind most of it around one of your middle fingers. Wind the remaining floss around the same finger of the opposite hand. This finger will take up the floss as it becomes dirty. Hold the floss tightly between your thumbs and forefingers.
- Guide the floss between your teeth using a gentle rubbing motion. Never snap the floss into the gums.
- When the floss reaches the gum line, curve it into a C shape against one tooth. Gently slide it into the space between the gum and the tooth.
- Hold the floss tightly against the tooth. Gently rub the side of the tooth, moving the floss away from the gum with up and down motions.
- Repeat this method on the rest of your teeth.
- Don't forget the back side of your last tooth.

For people with limited mobility or who have difficulty handling floss,

other interdental cleaners are available and may be an option. Your dentist can discuss this option with you and show you how to use them properly.

If you have any questions about how to properly floss or what type of floss to use, ask your dentist. You can find more information on flossing, including a flossing animation, by searching for "flossing" on the American Dental Association's Web site at [www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org).

If you make flossing a habit, you're sure to have a brighter, healthier smile. ■



## Diabetic Dental Care

**A**ccording to the American Dental Association, diabetes affects about 15.7 million Americans and each year, approximately 800,000 new cases are diagnosed. With such a significant, growing population affected by this chronic condition it is important to discuss how it impacts your oral health.

Diabetes is a disorder characterized by the body's inability to metabolize glucose, which generally results in high blood sugar levels. It is common for diabetic patients to experience some of these oral health complications:

- Tooth decay
- Gum disease
- Salivary gland dysfunction
- Inflammatory disease
- Infections and delayed healing

If diabetes is not properly controlled, the high sugar levels in saliva can help bacteria grow. The increased bacteria can attack the enamel on teeth and result in tooth decay.

If teeth are not properly cared for, the bacteria can harden into plaque, which is more difficult to remove and can lead to inflammation of gum tissue and infection. When delicate gum tissue is inflamed and infected, it becomes susceptible to periodontal disease—the effects of which can result in deep infections of the gum and bone and loss of teeth.

The best way to prevent these problems is to practice proper dental care. Brush teeth thoroughly twice a day and floss between teeth once a day.

You are encouraged to take advantage of the diagnostic and preventive benefits offered by the TRICARE Dental Program by scheduling regular checkups and professional cleanings with a participating dentist.

Be sure you let your dentist know if you have been recently diagnosed with diabetes, if you experience any problems with your teeth and gums or if your medical condition changes. Your dentist may suggest more frequent visits to help you maintain good dental health. ■

# Understand Your Options When Choosing a Dentist

**A**s a TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) enrollee in the CONUS service area, you have the flexibility to seek dental care from any civilian dentist of your choice. Finding someone you trust and feel comfortable with are important things to consider when choosing a dentist.

It is also important to select a dentist who participates in TDP, so you can receive the most affordable dental care. To help you understand your options, here are a few descriptions.

## Participating Dentists

A participating dentist has signed a contractual agreement with United Concordia to follow TDP rules for providing care and accepting payments. This means that when you receive treatment from a participating dentist you will never pay more than the applicable cost-share for services covered by TDP (subject to limitations and maximums).

It also means that participating dentists will submit claims and predetermination requests on your behalf. And, participating dentists participate in United Concordia's quality assurance programs, so you can be certain that you will receive quality dental care.

## Non-participating Dentists

Non-participating dentists have not signed a contractual agreement with United Concordia and may bill you for their full fee. If you receive care from a nonparticipating dentist you are responsible for paying the difference between United Concordia's allowance and the amount charged by the non-participating dentist, in addition to the applicable cost-share. Non-participating dentists are not required to submit claims for you, so you may have to submit claims yourself.

As you can see from the above descriptions, you'll save money and time by visiting a participating dentist.

## Finding a Dentist

Over 60,000 dentists participate in the TDP. Contact United Concordia at 1-800-866-8499 or visit the TDP Web site at [www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com](http://www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com) to find a participating dentist in your area or to find out if your current dentist participates with United Concordia.

If your dentist is non-participating, you may continue to receive care, but be aware that you will most likely pay higher out-of-pocket costs.

If your dentist is interested in becoming a participating dentist, ask him or her to call United Concordia's Customer Service Department at 1-800-866-8499 or visit the TDP Web site at [www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com](http://www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com).

## Seeking Dental Care Overseas

If you live near an overseas dental treatment facility (ODTF), you may receive space-available dental care from that facility. If you live in remote areas or if care is not available in the ODTF, you may receive care from local Host Nation Providers (HNPs).

The type of dental service available to you depends on whether you live in a remote or non-remote overseas location.

**Remote:** Remote overseas locations are countries where the uniformed services have no ODTFs such as Sweden, Egypt or Russia. If you live in a remote area and are enrolled in the TDP, you will receive your dental care from local HNPs.

*continued on page 11*

## **fast** facts

### Does It Hurt to Drink Iced Tea?

If the thought of drinking an ice-cold glass of water or a mug of hot coffee makes you cringe, it might be because you have sensitive teeth. It's common for individuals with sensitive teeth to experience discomfort or hypersensitivity to cold and hot foods and beverages. This sensitivity is usually caused by receding gums or the erosion of the tooth enamel that protects the dentin (softer, porous layer of teeth).

Daily brushing and flossing can help to prevent the problems that cause hypersensitivity. However, brushing incorrectly or too hard can result in receding gums and sensitive teeth.

Talk with your dentist if you experience sensitivity to cold and heat. Your dentist may recommend using a toothpaste or fluoride rinse that is specifically made for sensitive teeth. ■

## Understand Your Options When Choosing a Dentist

*continued from page 10*

**Non-remote:** Non-remote locations are those countries such as Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom that have fixed ODTFs. If enrolled, the TDP will cover family members living in these countries, thus augmenting the dental services provided by ODTFs. Patients must use a dentist listed on the HNP list in order to receive care outside of the ODTF.

Your local ODTF and TRICARE Area Office (TAO) identify and maintain a list of HNPs. To obtain a local HNP list contact your TAO or ODTF at the number or address below:

- Europe: 0049-6302-67-6358; [www.europe.tricare.osd.mil](http://www.europe.tricare.osd.mil)
- Latin America and Canada: 706-787-2424 or 888-777-8343, option 3; <http://www.tricare.mil/tlac>

- Pacific: 81-6117-43-2036; [www.tricare.mil/pacific](http://www.tricare.mil/pacific)

**Note:** When seeking orthodontic and implant services outside of the ODTF you will need to obtain a Non-Availability and Referral Form (NARF) from an ODTF or TAO, and you **must** use a dentist on the local HNP list. ■

## United Concordia Wants to Keep You Smiling

If you have questions about your TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) benefit or concerns about the quality of care you received from one of our participating dentists, we're here to help. United Concordia Companies, Inc. (United Concordia or UCCI) focuses on customer service and we've established several ways for you to ask questions, get advice and voice your concerns.

### Customer Service

Our customer service specialists will answer questions and provide guidance about your benefit. Because they're available by phone 24 hours a day, Monday through Friday, they are the fastest, surest way to get answers. If you need help finding a dentist, want to know if a procedure is covered, or have problems understanding your Dental Explanation of Benefits, call UCCI Customer service. They can help you with these and many other questions about your dental benefits.

You can also e-mail or send letters to United Concordia. For a list of addresses, e-mails and phone numbers to specific departments, such as claims, enrollment and billing, visit "Customer Service" at [www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com](http://www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com).

### Dental Benefits Advisors

United Concordia has a team of dental benefits advisors (DBAs) who specialize in helping you understand the TRICARE Dental Program. DBAs travel within their regions educating military audiences about the TDP at conferences, presentations and unit meetings. Although DBAs aren't available 24 hours, five days a week, like our customer service representatives, they are there to help you with questions and problems. If you'd like help from a DBA, contact your TRICARE Area Office or toll-free customer service line to locate the DBA in your region.

### Grievance Process

United Concordia has a quality review process in place to regularly monitor our participating dentists and our billing practices to ensure that you are getting the best quality of care. However, if you have a quality of care concern that your dentist is unable to satisfy, we want to hear from you. We'll investigate your concern, take appropriate action to resolve it and let you know the results.

Send details of your concern in a letter with your sponsor's name and Social Security number, your name and relationship to the sponsor and your dentist's name and address to the grievance address in the table below. ■

Customer Service	
<p>Inside the United States:</p> <p><b>Toll-free</b> <b>1-800-866-8499</b></p> <p><b>Toll-free TDD</b> <b>1-800-891-1854</b></p> <p>United Concordia TDP Customer Service P.O. Box 69410 Harrisburg, PA 17106-9410 <a href="mailto:conus@ucci.com">conus@ucci.com</a></p>	<p>Outside the United States:</p> <p><b>1-888-418-0466</b> (toll-free) available in specific overseas locations</p> <p><b>1-717-975-5017</b> (not toll-free) available in all other overseas locations</p> <p>United Concordia TDP OCONUS Dental Unit P.O. Box 69418 Harrisburg, PA 17106-9418 <a href="mailto:oconus@ucci.com">oconus@ucci.com</a></p>
Grievances	
<p>United Concordia TDP Quality of Care—Grievances 4401 Deer Path Road, DP-4E Harrisburg, PA 17110</p>	

# TRICARE Dental Health Matters



United Concordia  
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](http://www.tricare.mil/evaluations/feedback).

## What's New at [www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com](http://www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com)?

**W**ith more information and articles being added all the time, [www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com](http://www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com) is the place to go when you need quick or in-depth information about your dental benefits.

**Premiums** - Information on the 2007 and 2008-2009 TDP monthly premiums is currently available on the TDP Web site. Simply click on the "Enrollees" tab located on the TDP home page, click on "Cost-Shares/Premiums" and then select either "Active Duty Family Members" or "National Guard/Reserve" to link to your 2007 and 2008-2009 premiums.

**Updated DD Form 2813** - Also new, for members of the National Guard and Reserves, is a link to the new DD Form 2813, the *Department of Defense Active Duty/Reserve Forces Dental Examination* form.

DD Form 2813 is used to assist TRICARE Dental Program enrolled National Guard and Reserve forces in documenting their dental health. The form can be downloaded under the "Forms and Materials" link on the left side of TRICARE Dental Program homepage.

When you receive care from a civilian dentist under the TRICARE Dental Program, you can provide your dentist

with DD Form 2813 to document your dental condition. TRICARE Dental Program participating dentists will complete the form at no additional cost.

**New Dental Health Articles** - Under the "Dental Health" header on the main page is a link to "Your TDP Program." When you click on this link you are sent directly to a wide range of articles about your dental health.

Some recently added articles include: "Mouth Guards Protect Your Teeth and Much More," and "How Fresh is Your Breath?"

The mouth guard article discusses how they are one of the best ways for all athletes—both serious and recreational—to prevent dental injuries and the TRICARE Dental Program's coverage for mouth guards. (Custom made mouth guards are covered once in a consecutive 12-month period).

"How Fresh is Your Breath?" explains some of the common causes and cures you can explore if you suffer from halitosis.

For more information on your dental benefits, please visit the TRICARE Dental Program Web site, [www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com](http://www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com). ■