



The Dentist is in ...

A Simple Tip in Preventing Tooth Decay—Grab Some Gum and Go



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

Prevention of dental disease is what dentists strive for as it is healthier and less expensive for patients. For example, once a cavity is filled, there is a life-long cycle of replacement of fillings because they only last so long. Poor oral hygiene, such as lack of brushing, flossing and regular dental exams, can lead to root canals, crowns and sometimes extractions.

Dental prevention options for beneficiaries include, but are not limited to, sealants, fluoride, diet modification and oral hygiene.

TRICARE beneficiaries should practice good oral hygiene every day with regular brushing and flossing. Visit your dentist regularly for exams and cleanings. Most beneficiaries do not realize that there are other options that can be added to the prevention regimen that will help reduce cavities as well.

According to the Army’s “Look for Xylitol First Program,” research shows that chewing gum and eating candy that use Xylitol as the sweetener reduces cavity formation. Bacteria in the mouth multiply rapidly when fed by sugar. When you

...continued on page 4

Oral Health Risk Assessment

You may not realize how everyday activities can impact your oral health and possibly increase your risk for dental disease. To help you and your family keep healthy smiles, cavity risk assessments for both children and adults are available on the TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) Web site. These assessments can help you and your dentist figure out which activities may be putting you at greater risk for cavities.

Once you complete an assessment, the Web site offers specific advice on the steps you can take to lower your oral health risks. Remember, these online assessments are designed to help you understand your possible risk factors—they should not replace regular visits to the dentist.

To get started with a risk assessment, you can visit www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com and click on the “Enrollees” button. Next, select the “Dental Health” tab on the left side and choose the “Risk Assessments” option. ■



Important TDP Premium Information

At the time of this newsletter's publication, TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) monthly premium rates for the period beginning Aug. 1, 2011, were still being determined. Visit the TDP Web site at www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com for the most up-to-date information on possible rate changes

and other important program news. Please note that premium amounts will continue to be deducted from your military pay account or be billed directly to you. You do not need to take any action to continue your coverage. ■

Participating Dentists: Good for Your Smile and Your Wallet

As a TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) enrollee living in the United States, you have the flexibility to seek care from any civilian dentist. However, when you select a TDP-participating dentist, you can reduce both your out-of-pocket expenses and your paperwork. The TDP makes it easy to find a dentist who meets your needs by offering access to a network of more than 68,000 participating dentists.

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

- **Saving money:** Participating dentists accept United Concordia's allowance for covered services as payment in full and charge you only the applicable cost-share. With a nonparticipating dentist, you may need to pay the difference between United Concordia's allowance and the dentist's charge.
- **Saving time:** Participating dentists complete your claim form at no extra charge and submit it to United Concordia on your behalf. If you see a nonparticipating dentist, you may need to submit your own claim.

- **Peace of mind:** Participating dentists are subject to United Concordia's quality assurance programs and agree to routine verification of their credentials.
- **Dental readiness documentation:** Participating dentists complete the *Department of Defense Active Duty/Reserve 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 TDP-Participating Dentist?

Be sure to ask your dentist if he or she **participates** in the TDP, rather than if he or she accepts TDP or United Concordia. Most dentists (both participating and nonparticipating) will accept payment from United Concordia. However, that does not mean that a dentist is part of the TDP network.

Locating a Participating Dentist

- **Use the online dentist directory.** Visit the TDP Web site at www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com and click on "Enrollees," then "Find a Dentist" on the "Quick Links" panel on the right. You can search for a dentist by last name, specialty, city, county or ZIP code. The online directory is updated weekly and indicates if the dentist is accepting new patients.
- **Call United Concordia at 1-800-866-8499.** A TDP customer service representative will assist you with information regarding a dentist's participation status, specialty and office location.
- **Contact your local Beneficiary Counseling and Assistance Coordinator (BCAC).** An online BCAC directory can be found at www.tricare.mil/bcacdca. ■



United Concordia Offers New Customer Service Tools

United Concordia Companies, Inc. (United Concordia) recently implemented new technology to improve the level of convenience and service to both dental offices and TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) enrollees. Virtual Hold™ software allows United Concordia to provide exceptional service even after regular customer-service hours (customer service is available 24 hours a day, Monday through Friday). For the first time, after-hours callers will have the option to request a call back at a convenient time, rather than having to remember to call back the following day.

An additional customer-service enhancement, called WebConnect™, has been integrated into the TDP Web site on the contact information page. This feature gives you the option to click a link within the site and schedule a live phone call with a representative to assist you.

Both of these enhancements allow you to schedule calls from United Concordia at times that are convenient for you up to seven days in the future. ■

Don't Forget to Clean Your Tongue

Most people know that brushing and flossing daily are necessary to remove the food, bacteria and acid that promote tooth decay. But did you know your tongue and the insides of your cheeks also have millions of pores where damaging bacteria can hide?

The tongue's rough surface, especially in the back, has many tiny crevices that can harbor organisms and food debris and also contribute to bad breath. Dentists recommend brushing your tongue and walls of your mouth whenever you brush your teeth.

It can be challenging to comfortably reach and clean the back of the tongue, where most of the bacteria live, using just a toothbrush. Instead, you might want to use a tongue scraper or combination brush/scraper, which are specifically designed to glide along the tongue's surface and safely remove the bacterial coating.

Ask your dentist for his or her recommendation on tongue cleaning and devices. To learn more about taking care of your teeth, tongue and gums, look for dental health tips in the "Dental Health Center" on the TRICARE Dental Program's Web site at www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com. ■



Water Fluoridation

For many years, fluoride in drinking water has proven to be a safe and inexpensive way to protect individuals from tooth decay. Over 72 percent of communities fluoridate their water systems, including most of our military installations. The recent review of guidelines for fluoridation levels by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) are to be applauded, as they demonstrate the vigilance and responsibility with which these entities provide oversight for good oral health care for our communities.

Thanks to the most recent science-based evidence, HHS has updated its recommendations regarding the optimal level of

fluoride for public water supplies, standardizing the levels nationwide to prevent tooth decay. This decision will continue to protect Americans' oral health while also minimizing the chance of dental fluorosis (discoloration of teeth) from too much fluoride.

The recommended standardization in fluoride levels does not indicate a change in federal health officials' longstanding support of fluoride; rather, they acknowledge that fluoride is reaching kids from more sources today than it was in the 1960s, leading to an adjustment in the amount recommended in public water sources. ■

The Dentist is in ...

...continued from page 1

eat, acid is produced in your mouth through the interaction of bacteria (plaque) and food. This metabolic process produces acids that attack the enamel of teeth ultimately causing cavities to form.

Xylitol affects the bacteria associated with dental cavities. *Mutans Streptococci*, also known as “Strep Mutans” are acid-producing bacteria that attack tooth enamel minerals, which in turn cause tooth decay. Xylitol is ingested by the Strep Mutans just like any other sugar entering the mouth. However, the plaque-producing Strep bacteria are unable to breakdown the Xylitol. This in turn lowers the number and strength of the oral bacteria. With regular use, chewing Xylitol gum three to five times daily for about five minutes, has been shown to reduce cavity rates by between 35 percent and 70 percent in cavity-prone patients.

Xylitol is a sugar substitute, low in calories, which kills bacteria that lead to tooth decay. It is a natural sweetener

that comes from fibrous plant parts, but it does not break down like sugar. Xylitol is approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration as a sweetener. The cavity-reducing properties are simply a bonus. It contains two-thirds the calories of sugar and is safe for diabetics. For beneficiaries interested in using natural ingredients, Xylitol has the distinction of coming from a plant, and is not chemically manufactured as other sweeteners on the market.

It can be difficult to determine if a product has enough Xylitol to prevent cavity formation. It is best to look at the ingredients list. For chewing gum, when Xylitol appears first in the ingredients list, this is an indication that there is a sufficient therapeutic amount of Xylitol, according to the 2004 Army study on Xylitol.

Do your part in helping prevent cavities by brushing and flossing daily and reading the ingredients list the next time you shop for chewing gum or mints. ■

Floss for a Healthy Smile

Flossing is a critical part of caring for your smile, and many people don't floss often enough. The decision not to floss can be related to not knowing the proper technique. By learning how to floss correctly and doing it consistently, you can turn what might seem like a chore into a healthy habit for life.

For maximum flossing benefits, follow these four simple steps:

- Using 18 inches of floss, wind most of it around the middle finger of one hand and the rest around the middle finger of the other hand.
- Pinch the floss between your thumb and forefinger, leaving 1–2 inches in between.
- Gently guide floss between teeth using a zig-zag motion; be careful not to snap floss between your teeth.
- Curve floss into a c-shape when it reaches the gum line—slide the floss up and down against the tooth surface and beneath the gum line.

Repeat these steps for each tooth, including the far side of your back molars. Floss each tooth thoroughly with a clean section of floss. For a video demonstration of proper flossing technique, visit the TRICARE Dental Program Web site



at www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com. Click on “Dental Health Center” and then select “Improve Your Dental Health: View our video library.” ■

Tips to Ensure Timely and Accurate Premium Processing

TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) enrollees can save time, have less paperwork and experience fewer delays by submitting premium payments electronically. You can make online payments using United Concordia Companies, Inc.'s free e-Bill service, available through the TDP Web site.

To view and pay your invoices online using e-Bill, simply establish a Logon ID and password, and then enter your account information. To create an account and Logon ID:

- Visit www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com
- Click the “Enrollees” link
- Select the “Bill Paying Online” button under “Quick Links”
- Read the page and click the “Enroll Now” button
- Read the Terms and Conditions page, and then click the “Accept” button
- Follow the instructions provided to establish an account and set up a Logon ID and password

Note: Please keep a record of your Logon ID and password for future use.

After your account is created, you can make a payment in one of three ways: submit each payment manually; schedule each payment for a specific date; or set up automatic, recurring monthly payments.



If you wish to submit premium payments through the mail, you can help ensure timely processing by including your contract ID on the payment and mailing it to:

United Concordia
P.O. Box 827388
Philadelphia, PA 19182-7388 ■

Mouth Sores Have Many Causes

Sores in or around your mouth can be both painful and annoying. They can have a variety of causes, such as bacterial or viral infections or rubbing of dental fixtures (e.g., braces, dentures) on the inside of your mouth. Two of the most common types 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 do not provide enough relief, your dentist may prescribe antiviral drugs to combat these symptoms.

Canker Sores

Canker sores, which are not 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 a canker sore. Canker sores usually heal on their own after a week or two, but you can use over-the-counter topical painkillers and antimicrobial mouth rinses for temporary relief.

If you have a painful mouth sore that does not heal after more than a week, consult your dentist. Most importantly, brush and floss twice a day and see your dentist regularly for checkups and cleanings to help maintain your oral health. ■

KEEP YOUR SMILE HEALTHY!

1
2 3
4

There are many things you can do to keep your mouth and gums healthy. Here are four key steps for a healthy smile.

1. Brushing

The American Dental Association® recommends brushing twice a day to remove plaque from your teeth. Use a fluoride toothpaste and soft toothbrush and don't forget to brush your tongue, too.

2. Flossing

You should clean your teeth each day using dental floss. Be sure to floss between all of your teeth, as well as behind your back teeth, to clear out trapped food.

3. Eating Right

Eating healthy foods and limiting your sweets will help keep your teeth strong and healthy by avoiding tooth decay. Also, drinking water instead of sugary soft drinks will help avoid plaque buildup.

4. Visiting your Dentist

Your dentist can help you keep your mouth healthy with exams, cleanings, fluoride treatments and X-rays of your teeth. Your dentist may even put sealants on your teeth, which can help protect them from cavities. ■





Word Search!

D	S	X	C	A	V	I	T	Y	S	Y	S
C	E	A	F	J	S	W	E	E	T	S	U
E	A	T	C	L	N	N	C	E	J	H	N
K	L	O	T	M	U	A	Y	H	S	G	S
Q	A	R	Z	W	R	O	S	U	Z	C	T
B	N	T	B	B	U	A	R	T	O	G	X
L	T	G	F	K	E	B	S	I	Y	V	O
M	S	C	Y	U	H	I	B	R	D	H	R
B	U	P	Q	T	T	K	M	Q	F	E	O
Z	I	A	O	N	U	I	W	I	E	P	M
H	L	O	E	O	N	M	O	L	A	R	S
P	T	D	O	E	N	A	M	E	L	D	K

FLUORIDE—added to tap water in many towns and cities; strengthens your teeth and protects them from decay

CAVITY—tooth decay that forms when the enamel on your teeth breaks down

PLAQUE—a sticky layer of bacteria that covers your teeth

TOOTHBRUSH—the soft brush used with toothpaste twice a day to clean your teeth

ENAMEL—the hard outer layer of your teeth

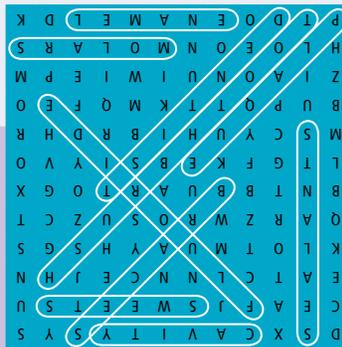
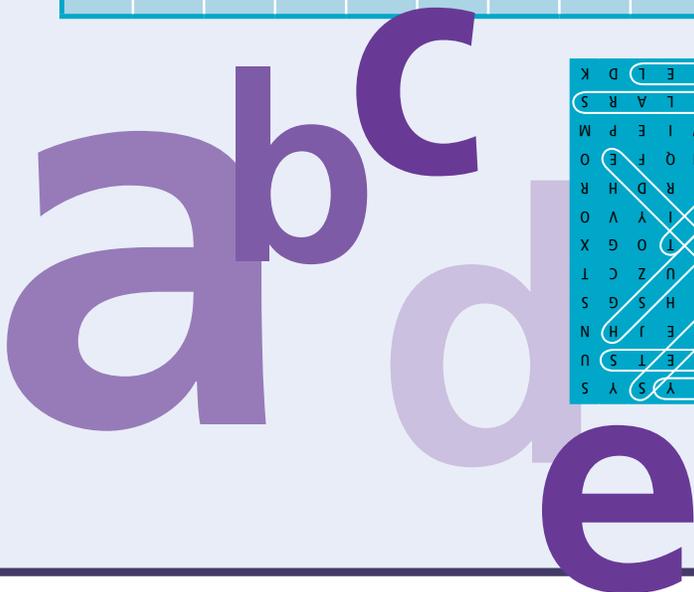
MOLARS—the teeth in the back of your mouth with flat chewing surfaces

DENTIST—regular visits help to keep your teeth clean and healthy

BRACES—corrective gear that will help you smile with straighter teeth

SWEETS—eating too many can lead to cavities in your teeth

SEALANTS—a thin coating your dentist can put over a tooth's surface that helps protect it from decay



ANSWERS

TRICARE[®] Dental Health Matters



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

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



"TRICARE" is a registered trademark of the TRICARE Management Activity. All rights reserved.

Salute Your Dentist!

As a TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) enrollee, you may regularly relocate for new assignments. Each time you and your family start fresh in a new location, one of the many items on your to-do list is finding a new dentist. To help make this task a little easier, United Concordia Companies, Inc. (United Concordia) provides the "Salute Your Dentist" program. This program allows TDP enrollees to acknowledge and compliment network dentists who have provided superior service. You can submit positive comments about your own dentist—and when you move to a new area, you can review other TDP enrollees' comments when searching for a new dentist to meet your family's needs.

To recommend your current network dentist, you can submit comments through the TDP Web site. After a United Concordia review, your comments will be posted on the Web site and will be available for others to view by city and state. If you would like to use this tool to submit comments or check out a new dentist, visit www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com and click on the "Salute Your Dentist" button in the scrolling bar at the bottom of the page. ■



NE311BET04112DE