

In Touch

with the
TRICARE Retiree Dental Program



Winter 2011

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Volume 10, Issue 1

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This newsletter for enrollees and beneficiary liaisons of the TRICARE Retiree Dental Program is published quarterly by Marketing and Communications in the Federal Government Programs division of Delta Dental of California. Your comments and suggestions are welcome and should be directed to:

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The development of this piece is supported by Department of Defense Contract No. H94 002-07-C-003. The TRICARE Retiree Dental Program is administered and underwritten by Delta Dental of California. The views, opinions and findings contained in this publication are those of the author(s) and should not be construed as official Department of Defense position policy or decision unless so designated by other official documentation.

TRDP MM041 01/11

Happy New Year from Delta Dental of California's Federal Government Programs division and the TRDP

The holidays are over, another year has come and gone and a new year has arrived! As the administrator for the TRICARE Retiree Dental Program (TRDP), all of us in the Federal Government Programs division of Delta Dental of California extend our best wishes to our TRDP enrollees, installation contacts and their families for a happy and healthy 2011.

During the first three months of 2011 we will be celebrating a number of important birthdays, notable holidays and select special observations. Many of our country's most revered citizens and great statesmen were born in January—among them Paul Revere, Betsy Ross, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Benjamin Franklin.

February has been deemed National Children's Dental Health Month to recognize the important role our children's oral health plays in keeping us strong and healthy into our adult lives.

According to folklore, on February 2 that infamous prognosticator Punxsutawney Phil will peek out from his burrow to look for his shadow (or not). It may not be a very romantic thought, but after consuming those heart-shaped chocolates you got from your sweetheart on Valentine's Day (an estimated 58 million pounds of chocolate candy will be purchased for the holiday), February 14 should be a day that reminds us to check when we're due for our next dental visit. February 21 marks the country's observation of the birthdays of two of our most honored U.S. presidents, Abraham Lincoln and George Washington.

March is a much quieter month. Rounding out the notable events for the first quarter of the year are the birthdays of Andrew Jackson on March 15 and James Madison on March 16.

Soon we will be done celebrating each of these occasions, and an entire year will pass before we have the opportunity to celebrate them again. But here at Delta Dental we have the opportunity each and every day to celebrate the valuable service our nation's retired military members have provided for us, and to celebrate the privilege of serving them and their family members through our administration of the TRDP. We appreciate your enrollment in and ongoing support of the TRDP—now almost 1.3 million enrollees strong. We look forward to continuing to provide you the benefits of this valuable program in 2011 and beyond.

February is National Children's Dental Health Month

As it has for the past 60 years, the American Dental Association (ADA) will again sponsor National Children's Dental Health Month (NCDHM) in February 2011 to raise awareness about the importance of oral health. Messages and materials promoting the mission and goals of NCDHM reach out to millions of people annually in communities across the country.

NCDHM began as a one-day event in Cleveland, Ohio on February 3, 1941. The American Dental Association held the first national observance of Children's Dental Health Day on February 8, 1949. This single-day observance became a week-long event in 1955, and in 1981 the program was extended to a month-long celebration known today as National Children's Dental Health Month.

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The month will begin with the ADA's national health outreach event, the Give Kids A Smile® campaign, which enhances the oral health of large numbers of needy children. Each year on the first Friday in February, thousands of the nation's dentists and their dental team members provide free oral health care services to children from low-income families across the country. The Give Kids A Smile® activities highlight the ongoing challenges that low-income families face in finding dental care.

The ADA website has free online resources that can be used by parents, teachers and dental professionals alike to help young children develop good dental habits and give them a head start on a lifetime of healthy teeth and gums. For more information, visit the NCDHM content area of the ADA website at www.ada.org.

Check Consumer Toolkit® for YTD remaining deductibles, maximums and due date for next dental checkup

January is a good time to check in on your TRDP benefits and check out our new and improved self-service Consumer Toolkit. Your annual TRDP benefits are based on a contract year (October 1 through September 30), but if you're like most people, the rest of your life operates primarily on a calendar year--so by now you're probably wondering how much of your deductible you've already met, how much of your annual maximum you have left to spend on dental care over the next several months, and if you are on track with scheduling your next cleaning and exam. To access all this information and more, just go to www.trdp.org, then click on the Consumer Toolkit link on the home page for Current Enrollees. Once you reach the toolkit, follow the directions for logging on and then easily navigate around to find everything you need to manage your TRDP benefits for the months ahead.

The Smile Corner •••

Q. What is a drill team?

A. A group of dentists who work together.

FROM THE FRONT LINES

By Doug Schobel, TRDP Senior Marketing Representative – Northeast region and OCONUS (CT, MA, ME, NH, NY, RI, VT)

It's hard to believe how fast 2010 flew by! As a team, my fellow TRDP marketing representatives and I attended more than 100 Retiree Appreciation Days; presented information about the TRDP at hundreds of Transition Assistance Program classes and pre-retirement seminars throughout the country; participated in a wide variety of military association conferences and conventions; and most importantly, had the pleasure of talking to and assisting hundreds of thousands of retired service members, soon-to-be-retirees, and family members. It never ceases to amaze me what an honor it is to serve such a wonderful group of individuals.

With 2010 now in the rearview mirror, we have been diligently filling up our schedules for 2011. Not surprisingly, it looks like it is going to be another full, fun and productive year for the TRDP! I'd like to take this opportunity to wish you all a Happy New Year and to thank you for your support and friendship over the years. I'd also like to send out a special thank you to all of our contacts and friends who are being affected by the base closings early this year. We appreciate and honor you, and hope to see you all very soon!

Your mouth often speaks volumes about your health

Even without uttering a sound, your mouth—including your teeth, gums and surrounding tissues—can say a lot about your overall health.

Anthony Iacopino, dean of the University of Manitoba Faculty of Dentistry and a spokesperson for the American Dental Association (ADA), tells us that because your mouth is connected to the rest of your body, “what we see in the mouth can have a significant effect on other organ systems and processes in the body. And the reverse is also true: Things that are going on systemically in the body can manifest in the mouth.”

The following can often be warning signs that something serious is going on with regard to your health. You should always be sure to have worrisome symptoms checked out by your dentist or physician.

1. Flat, worn teeth and persistent headaches

“Crunching and grinding the teeth at night during sleep is a common sign of emotional or psychological stress,” says Iacopino. Many people are surprised when they learn they are tooth-grinders and often underestimate the physical toll that clenching and grinding your teeth can place on the body. Worn-down teeth can make chewing difficult. The jaw may ache from the clenching, and spasms in the muscles doing the grinding can cause headaches, with pain that can sometimes radiate from the mouth and head down to the neck and upper back. Using a mouth guard at night can relieve the symptoms and protect your teeth.

2. Cracking, crumbling or eroding teeth [this section really describes erosion]

When tooth enamel becomes thin and almost translucent, teeth become vulnerable to cracking or crumbling away. Although it appears to be a condition most noticeable in older adults, this erosion is not a normal consequence of aging. In fact, it can happen at any age, says Iacopino.

Disintegrating teeth are usually caused by acid that is coming up from the stomach and dissolving or eroding them. The cause is gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD, also known as acid reflux disease), a chronic disorder caused by damage or other changes to the natural barrier between the stomach and the esophagus. With GERD, stomach acid backs up into the esophagus and then into the mouth, where it can damage the tooth enamel. Tooth erosion in younger people can also be a telltale sign of bulimia,

the eating disorder in which the sufferer induces vomiting after eating, resulting in erosion similar to that from GERD.

3. Persistent sores in the mouth

Many people bite the insides of their mouths as a nervous habit or sometimes accidentally, creating a sore. But when an open sore in the mouth doesn't go away within a week or two, it should be seen by a dentist or physician.

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SOME IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

January

- 1 – New Year’s Day
- 1 – Paul Revere’s birthday (1735)
- 1 – Betsy Ross’s birthday (1752)
- 15 – Martin Luther King, Jr.’s birthday (1929)
- 17 – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (2011 observed)
- 17 – Benjamin Franklin’s birthday (1706)

February:

- 2 – Groundhog’s Day
- 3 – Chinese New Year 2011 (Year of the Rabbit)
- 11 – Thomas Edison’s birthday (1847)
- 12 – Abraham Lincoln’s birthday (1809)
- 14 – Valentine’s Day
- 21 – Presidents’ Day (2011 observed)
- 22 – George Washington’s birthday (1732)

March:

- 3 – “Star-Spangled Banner” became the official National Anthem (1931)
- 15 – Andrew Jackson’s birthday (1767)
- 16 – James Madison’s birthday (1751)

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According to the National Cancer Institute, more than 21,000 men and 9,000 women a year are diagnosed with oral cancer; most of those diagnosed are over age 60. Oral cancer has a survival rate of only 35 percent, mainly because cases are often detected too late, says Iacopino. Look for suspicious oral ulcers that are raised and have irregular red and/or white borders, around the inside of the mouth and under the tongue. Although bleeding and numbness are other signs of oral cancer, sometimes the only sign is a sore that will not go away. Your dentist may want to perform a biopsy following a visual check of the sore.

4. Gums growing over teeth

Certain medications can stimulate the growth of gum tissue. The overgrowth can cause an uncomfortable sensation; in extreme cases, the entire tooth can be covered, making it difficult to brush and floss and thereby inviting tooth decay and periodontal disease.

If you are taking a medication for heart disease or seizures or you take drugs to suppress your immune system (such as before a transplant) and you notice your gum literally growing over your tooth, you should mention this condition to your doctor. “A swelling of the gums to where it grows over the teeth is a sign the dosage or the medication needs to be adjusted,” Iacopino says.

5. Dry mouth

Dehydration and allergies are just two of the causes of dry mouth. Even medications can cause dry mouth; in fact, hundreds of drugs list dry mouth as a side effect, including those to treat depression and incontinence, muscle relaxants, anti-anxiety agents and antihistamines. But a lack of sufficient saliva can also be an early warning of two autoimmune diseases unrelated to medicine use: Sjogren’s syndrome and diabetes.

Sjogren’s syndrome is a disorder in which white blood cells attack the body’s moisture-producing glands. People with Sjogren’s syndrome are often misdiagnosed and may go several years before being properly diagnosed because its symptoms, including dry mouth, are often identical to those of other diseases, like diabetes.

Diabetes is a metabolic disease caused by high blood sugar. Besides dry mouth, other signs of diabetes include excessive thirst, tingling in the hands and feet, frequent urination, blurred vision and weight loss.

6. White webbing inside cheeks

Lichen planus is a skin disorder that tends to strike both men and women ages 30 to 70. The mucus membranes in the mouth are often a first target. Oral lichen planus on the insides of the cheeks looks like a whitish, lacy pattern, similar to that of tree lichen. According to Iacopino, seventy percent of lesions appear in the mouth before they strike other parts of the body. Lichen planus often goes away on its own but sometimes requires treatment.

7. Crusting dentures

Although most people do not associate having dentures (false teeth) with pneumonia, the two make a potentially deadly connection. A soft, crusty material can often form around dentures if they are not carefully cleaned. In aspiration pneumonia—a leading cause of death in older people—this foreign matter is breathed into the lungs and airway, causing dangerous and even fatal, inflammation.

Death from aspiration pneumonia all too often stems from failure to clean dentures properly. Dentures should be removed daily from the mouth, cleaned with a special brush, and stored in a cleansing solution. With proper denture cleaning, “you can get a 100-percent reduction in what’s otherwise a leading cause of death for denture wearers,” says Iacopino.

Information courtesy of <http://health.yahoo.net/>

TRDP enrollment application expiration date extended

Some prospective enrollees have brought it to our attention that the current TRDP enrollment application expired on 10-31-10. If you are considering enrolling in the TRDP, you can be assured that the application is still valid and will be honored for those enrolling after that date. The TRICARE Management Activity, which oversees Delta’s administration of the TRDP contract, has granted a formal extension allowing us to continue using the current application form (OMB No. 0720-0015) until an updated one is printed and ready for distribution later this year.