

In Touch

*with the TRICARE Retiree
Dental Program*



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Dental implants may be a suitable alternative for replacing missing teeth

Just about every adult will at some time lose one or more teeth, and more than 35 million Americans have lost all their teeth.

In the past, dentures and bridges have traditionally been used to replace missing teeth. But conventional dentures and bridges may not be your only options when replacing missing teeth.

Dental implants can be a safe, strong and reliable solution for missing teeth. The first dental implants were placed in 1964; today, more than a million dental implants are placed annually.

Modern technology has made dental implant treatment procedures more advanced and affordable than ever before. As of October 1, 2008, dental implant services are now covered by the TRDP at 50% of the program allowed amount and a \$1,200 annual maximum after a 12-month waiting period has been satisfied. Here are some commonly asked questions about dental implants:

What are dental implants?

Implants are metal posts that are placed surgically in the upper or lower jaw where they function much like the natural roots of teeth, as anchors for replacement teeth. Implants are made of titanium and other materials that are compatible with the human body.

What are some reasons I would consider having dental implants?

There are several reasons to replace a missing tooth. Depending on their location, some missing teeth may affect your speech. A missing molar might not be noticeable when you talk or smile, but its absence can affect chewing. When a tooth is missing, the biting force on the remaining teeth begins to change. As the bite changes to compensate for the lost tooth, there is a risk of extra pressure on and discomfort in the jaw joints. If a missing tooth is not replaced, the surrounding teeth can shift; harmful plaque and tartar can collect in new hard-to-reach places created by the shifting teeth. Over time, this may lead to tooth decay and periodontal disease.

What are the some of the benefits of dental implants?

Because they fuse to your bone, implants can stabilize your bite and help prevent problems with the jaw.

An implant looks and feels like a natural tooth, so for some people, dental implants offer a smile that looks and feels very natural.

A dental implant fits securely when you chew and speak. Some people find the secure fit more comfortable than conventional alternatives.

Unlike a bridge, a single-tooth implant is a free-standing unit and does not involve treatment to the adjacent teeth. With a dental implant, the surrounding teeth can remain untouched if they are healthy, and their strength and integrity may be maintained.

How do I know if I am a candidate for dental implants?

If you are missing a tooth but you are in good general health, with healthy gums and a jawbone that can support an implant, implant treatment may be an option for you.

Health is more a factor than age in helping to determine if a dental implant is the best option for replacing a missing tooth. Chronic illnesses, such as diabetes or leukemia, may interfere with healing after surgery. If you use tobacco, you are at greater risk of experiencing gum disease, which can weaken the bone and tissues needed to support the implant.

Candidates for dental implants need to have healthy gums and adequate bone to support the implant. A thorough evaluation by your dentist will help determine whether you are a good candidate for dental implants.

For more information about dental implants, visit www.ada.org/public/topics/implants.asp. Refer to the “Covered Services” section of the TRDP Enhanced Program Benefits Booklet for a listing of covered dental implant procedures and corresponding policies.

Information provided in part by www.ada.org.

From the front lines

By Michelle Banks-Gainer, TRDP Marketing Representative, Southeast Region and District of Columbia

The TRICARE Retiree Dental Program (TRDP) is 11 years old as of February 1, 2009, and I was selected to be one of the original marketing representatives for the TRDP even before the program started. I still remember the joy and excitement I felt when I received that phone call asking me to come to Sacramento, California for an in-person interview. And, as they say, the rest is history!

To this day, working as a regional marketing representative for the TRDP is the most exciting career that I could have embarked upon. The opportunity to meet new people everywhere I go, and the ability to help them simply by making them aware of this wonderful program, are but two of the many reasons I enjoy my job so much.

Sometimes when I'm in a medical clinic or the pharmacy area of an installation, I run into a retiree who spots my TRDP bag and says “Wow, I didn't even know there was a dental program for retirees!” And, it is so rewarding when retirees share their experiences with me—especially when they have actually saved money or received outstanding customer service as a TRDP enrollee.

One such situation that I am reminded of occurred with a business contact at Quantico Marine Corps in Quantico, VA. The TRICARE community representative at the medical clinic there, Bob Adams, was briefing Uniformed Services members on TRICARE medical benefits, and I was scheduled to do a presentation on dental benefits for retirees.

During my presentation, Mr. Adams heard me mention that the TRDP covers an enrolled member's eligible child up to age 23 if the child is a full-time student. Well, it dawned on Mr. Adams—who happened to be a TRDP enrollee himself—that his daughter was 24 and he was still paying TRDP premiums for her! (Coincidentally, she had not used any program benefits since she turned 23, so he thought she was covered up to age 25.)

We spoke after my presentation, and I offered to do some research; I discovered that he was indeed still paying for his daughter's coverage and was due a partial refund of his TRDP premiums.

When I called Mr. Adams to advise him he would be receiving a refund check in the mail, he was very grateful—he even e-mailed me the day he received his refund check. Needless to say, he was a very happy TRDP member.

For me, that's what it's all about. I love making people happy! If a TRDP member is happy, then I'm happy, too.

My 81-year-old grandmother said that she would love for my elementary school teachers to see what I'm doing now. You see, back then I used to get in trouble for talking too much in class. Now, I get paid to talk to people and help them, all at the same time!!! It doesn't get any better than that—and the opportunity to serve all of our retirees is just the icing on the cake!

Military commissaries: Good for shopping and learning about the TRDP, too!

As most every current and former service member knows, the military commissary is more than just another grocery store. The commissary is considered an important military family support element and a top non-pay benefit that enhances the quality of life for military members and their families by ensuring they have affordable access to American products in a safe and secure environment.

According to the website for the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA), which oversees a worldwide chain of commissaries, shoppers save an average of more than 30 percent on their commissary purchases. But the importance of the commissary to the military family community extends beyond grocery cost-savings. For instance:

- The DeCA Patron Council, which is made up of members of various service organizations and associations representing active duty, Guard, Reserve and retired service personnel and their families, meets annually to discuss concerns and suggestions for improvement brought to the council by the commissaries' customer base.
- Commissaries help support the military community through a scholarship program that is primarily funded by many of the manufacturers and suppliers whose products are sold at military commissaries all over the world.
- Through the scholarship program, DeCA's commissaries work with a foundation that provides a place to stay near military medical centers for military families experiencing personal medical crises.
- DeCA's environmental program and initiatives continually work toward making the commissary shopping experience as "green" and earth-friendly as possible.

This year, Delta Dental of California is proud to be one of the sponsors of a campaign to encourage our military retirees to use the commissary shopping benefit and help support their community. Many retired commissary shoppers are already enrolled in Delta Dental's TRICARE Retiree Dental Program (TRDP), but there are still some—including many retired National Guard and Reserve members—who are not yet aware that this dental program is available to them.

While shopping at the commissary, it is not uncommon to find representatives from various TRICARE organizations distributing health and dental care information. Since it can be difficult for some retirees to visit their local TRICARE office, the opportunity to pick up health care information at the commissary and meet their regional medical and TRDP representative enables them to take care of two errands in one convenient trip.

Although the presence of health care information tables at the commissary can at times be random, you will most often see them set up at the beginning of the month. Most recently, the TRDP had tables in the commissaries at Luke AFB, Davis-Monthan AFB, and Fort Huachuca in Arizona; on July 31, look for our table in the commissary at Fort Gillem in Georgia. Be sure to check the online Calendar of Events often, as we are always adding new dates for table events as well as other upcoming events in your area.

Information provided in part by www.commissaries.com.

The Smile Corner

The Toothpaste Test

See how many words of four or more letters you can make from the word: TOOTHPASTE

- You may use each letter only once
- No plurals and no foreign words are allowed
- Score: 10 = Fair; 20 = Good; 25 or more = Excellent



Some answers: eats, east, haste, heat, hoot, host, hotpot, opts, past, paste, path, peat, pest, pesto, post, seat, shape, shoot, shop, soothe, spat, spot, state, step, stoop, stop, taste, test, taps, that, tops, toot, tooth

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Important dates to remember

July

4 Fourth of July
(Independence Day)

August

1 Air Force Day

4 Coast Guard Day

7 Purple Heart Day

14 V-J Day

19 Aviation Day

23 International Day for
Remembrance of the
Slave Trade and Its
Abolition