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UNITED CONCORDIA® DENTAL
Protecting More Than Just Your Smile®

January 2021

Oral Wellness Newsletter

Happy New Year everyone! Share our January newsletter by using the "forward this email" button. Or highlight the text you want, then copy and paste it wherever you like.



Can masks cause cavities?

Ever notice that, as soon as you strap on a mask, you start breathing through your mouth rather than your nose?

Masks can smell funny inside – and our trapped breath can smell even funnier. So, inhaling through your mouth may protect your nose from those nasty scents. But all that air can cause dryness, leading to cavities, inflamed gums and other oral issues^[1] – conditions dentists are calling “mask mouth”.

Mouth breathing dries out saliva, which protects your teeth by washing away bacteria and food debris.^[1] Left on the teeth and gums, that destructive goo can begin to eat away at your enamel and irritate your gums.

And wearing a mask may deter you from drinking enough water, which also helps to rinse teeth clean. You may become dehydrated, making your dry mouth worse.

To help prevent mask mouth, make sure to keep up with your daily home-care routine. Brush at least twice and floss once every day. Plus, stay hydrated by sipping water throughout the day. You can also chew sugar-free gum or suck on sugar-free lozenges to help stimulate your own saliva.

If you notice symptoms or have any concerns about your oral health, talk to your dentist or dental hygienist about what to do.

[Get more ways to stop the stink](#)



Antidepressants and dry mouth

The overwhelming stress brought on by the global pandemic – and 2020 in general – has more people than ever taking anti-anxiety meds. According to a recent study, the number of adults suffering from depression symptoms has more than tripled during COVID-19.^[2]

If you started taking something to calm your nerves and notice your mouth has been feeling dry, it might be a side effect. More than 400 over-the-counter and prescription medications can cause or worsen oral dryness, including antidepressants and muscle relaxants.^[3]

If you have dry mouth, don't ignore it. Though it's not a disease, dry mouth can cause plenty of uncomfortable problems. You may have a sore throat, burning in your mouth, trouble talking, and difficulty swallowing.^[4] Dry mouth can also lead to cavities and gum disease.^[1]

Rest assured, there are steps you can take at home to alleviate that sticky feeling. Your dentist may also recommend products that can help.

[Read about relief for dry mouth](#)



6 Tips to maximize your plan in 2021

Welcome to a new year of United Concordia Dental coverage! If your plan is effective starting January 1, you have 365 days of quality insurance to take advantage of. These tips can help you get the most value out of it.

Create a *MyDentalBenefits* account

It's the online hub for your dental plan info. With *MyDentalBenefits*, you can see what your plan covers and how much we'll pay, check claims status, chat live or upgrade to a call with

customer service, and opt in to paperless Explanation of Benefits (EOBs). [Sign up now.](#)

Schedule preventive care

Most plans cover routine dental exams, cleanings and X-rays at 100%. Can't remember when you last saw the dentist? [Check your *MyDentalBenefits* account](#) to see when you're due for an appointment.

Use an in-network dentist

Remember, you save more money when you stay in network. Use our [Find-a-Dentist tool](#) to locate in-network dentists – and even schedule appointments online.

Understand your benefits

Your Schedule of Benefits shows what you may owe for different dental procedures. Keep it handy to help budget for your care. If you need a major procedure, ask your dentist for a “predetermination” first. It's a free estimate that helps you understand your costs so there are no surprises.

Know your deductible and your annual maximum

A deductible is the amount you must pay for dental care before your plan starts helping out. Your annual maximum is the most your plan will cover each year. Most deductibles and annual maximums reset each year, so don't put off work you need.

Take *My Dental Assessment*

See the impact of your lifestyle, diet, medical conditions and dental history on your oral health. Take this two-minute survey, and then print a report to review with your dentist at your next visit. You may even earn wellness points through your company! [Start My Dental Assessment.](#)



How to check for oral cancer

Did you know that dentists perform oral cancer screenings as part of routine exams? That's why it's important to take advantage of your covered preventive checkups.

Almost 90% of people survive oral cancer when it's caught early.^[5] Unfortunately, most cases are diagnosed in the later stages after the cancer has spread.

If you're between exams, it's easy to do a simple self-exam at home. Make sure to discuss any concerns with your dentist, especially if problems last longer than two weeks.

Oral cancer symptoms:

- Mouth or throat sore that won't heal
- Lump or mass in your cheek or neck
- White or red patches on the tonsils, mouth, tongue or gums
- Tingling or numbness in the mouth or tongue
- Loosening or pain around your teeth
- Consistent bad breath, weight loss or voice changes

[Take the oral self exam](#)



Saving trees, one opt-in at a time

Are you trying to waste less in 2021? Get more organized or live more sustainably? No matter your New Year's resolution, signing up for paperless Explanations of Benefits (EOBs) is a simple way to help the environment and make a lasting change.

Every time United Concordia processes your dental claims, we mail you an EOB statement. But with paperless EOBs, we simply send an email when they're ready to view in your ***MyDentalBenefits*** account – no paper or hassle involved.

By opting in, you'll help us plant 25,000 trees with the [Arbor Day Foundation®](#) and contribute to their [Time for Trees initiative](#), which has a goal of planting 100 million trees by 2022.

[Opt in to paperless EOBs today.](#)



Chicken, Pasta and Spinach Soup

Serves 4

Is it just us, or do many New Year's resolutions revolve around food? Whether yours is to eat healthier, spend more family time around the table, or learn to cook, healthy recipes can help you succeed. This soup takes just 10 minutes to whip up and it's packed with nutrients.

Chicken is a great source of protein. And spinach is rich in vitamins A and C, plus phosphorus, a mineral stored in your teeth and bones to help your body absorb calcium and magnesium.[6] Start the year off right with a delicious bowl full!

[Get the recipe](#)

Ingredients:

- 1 box low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 diced tomato
- 2 oz. whole grain or multigrain pasta (we recommend rotini)
- 2 cups diced chicken breast (cooked)
- 1 cup packed baby spinach
- ¼ cup chopped fresh basil
- 1 tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 2 tbsp. grated Parmesan cheese for topping

Directions:

In a medium saucepan, combine the broth and tomato (including its liquid), and bring to a boil over high heat. Stir in the pasta and return to a boil, then reduce heat, cover, and let simmer for 6 minutes or until pasta is tender.

Remove from heat and stir in all remaining ingredients except the cheese. Cover and let stand for 5 minutes to absorb flavors and heat through. Serve topped with cheese.

Nutrition info per serving

260 calories | 10g total fat | 2.5g saturated fat | 60mg cholesterol | 430mg sodium | 15g carbs | 3g dietary fiber | 4g total sugars | 26g protein | 580mg potassium | 250 mg phosphorus

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[1] [Dental Implications of Xerostomia](#); ada.org; July 2019

[2] [Prevalence of Depression Symptoms in US Adults Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#); jamanetwork.com; September 2020

[3] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General. Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, National Institutes of Health; 2000

[4] [Dry Mouth](#); mouthhealthy.org; 2020

[5] The role of dental and medical professionals; The Oral Cancer Foundation; January 2017

[6] [Eat Fruits and Veggies For A Healthy Smile](#); University of Illinois at Chicago College of Dentistry; July 25, 2017



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