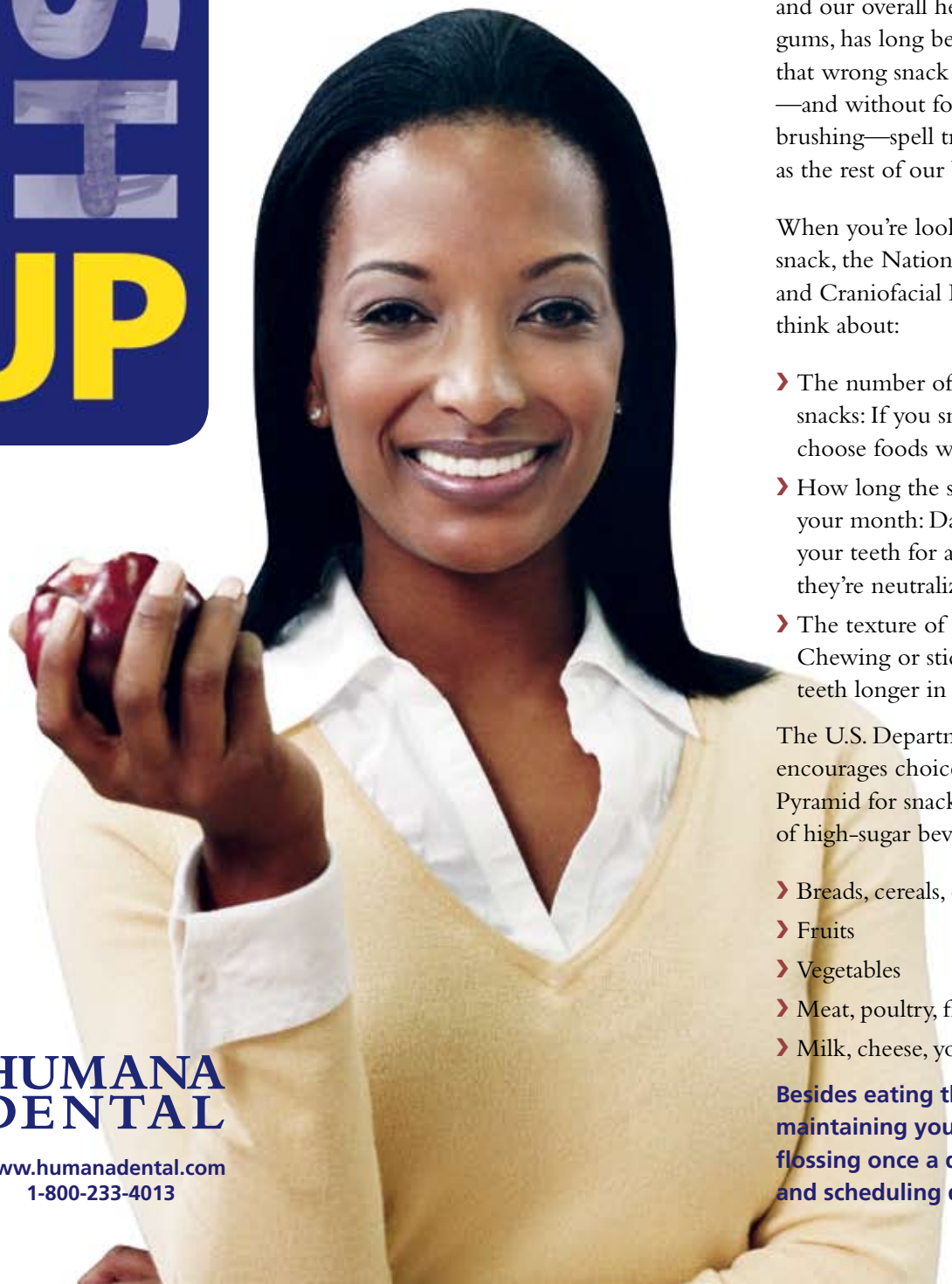
BRUSH UP
A quarterly brush up on your HumanaDental benefits

autumn 2006

Smart snacking

Tooth-friendly ways to satisfy a snack attack



The link between the food choices we make and our overall health, including teeth and gums, has long been recognized. We know that wrong snack choices made too often —and without following up with flossing and brushing—spell trouble for our teeth as well as the rest of our bodies.

When you're looking for a between-meals snack, the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research suggests you think about:

- The number of times a day you eat sugary snacks: If you snack throughout the day, choose foods without a lot of sugar and fat.
- How long the sugary food stays in your month: Damaging acids affect your teeth for at least 20 minutes before they're neutralized.
- The texture of the sugary food: Chewing or sticky foods bathe your teeth longer in sugar.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture encourages choices from its Food Guide Pyramid for snacks, as well as meals, instead of high-sugar beverages and foods:

- Breads, cereals, other grain products
- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs, nuts
- Milk, cheese, yogurt

Besides eating the right foods, maintaining your overall health includes flossing once a day, brushing twice daily, and scheduling dental checkups.

HUMANA DENTAL
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Understand your treatment plan before dental work begins

If you and your doctor decide that extensive dental work is in your future, you may want to ask for a written treatment plan.

HumanaDental always recommends submitting a dental treatment plan to us when services are expected to be more than $300 so we can estimate benefits. The treatment plan needs to include:

- A list of services to be performed using American Dental Association codes
- Your dentist's written description of the proposed treatment
- Supporting pretreatment X-rays showing your dental needs
- Itemized cost of the proposed treatment.

Estimates, which are valid for 90 days, do not include possible benefits if you're insured by another group plan. You must be covered by the HumanaDental plan when services are provided.

If immediate work is needed, call a HumanaDental customer service specialist if you want to ask about benefits. Providing details about your treatment plan will ensure you get thorough answers to your questions about your dental plan coverage.

No estimate is needed for emergency care.

Q A When does my dental plan cover general anesthesia?

Your HumanaDental plan benefits cover general anesthesia when medically necessary and administered by a dentist for covered surgical procedures. Medical necessity is a condition that presents a significant risk to the patient's health.

Examples of medical necessity can include uncontrolled high blood pressure or seizures. Patient management (controlling fear or anxiety, or behavior issues in children) is not considered a medical necessity.

Note: Benefits are subject to deductibles, annual maximum benefits, and frequency limits, based on plan provisions, that may impact your share of the cost. See your group benefit plan document for details.

Did you know?

The term 4F—meaning not acceptable for military service—dates back to the Civil War. A soldier had to be able to hold his muzzle-loading rifle in one hand and tear open the powder cartridge with his teeth. If the doctor didn't see four opposing front teeth on the recruit, the person would be declared 4F: missing four front teeth.

Inform dentist if you have an artificial joint

If you have a knee, hip or other artificial joint, let your dentist know before any dental work begins. Bacteria from the teeth or gums can enter the bloodstream and settle in the artificial joint, making it vulnerable to infection.

The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons and American Dental Association recommends preventive antibiotics for these dental procedures:

- Extractions
- Periodontal procedures
- Dental implant placement and reimplantation of teeth
- Endodontic instrumentation or surgery
- Initial placement of orthodontic bands (not brackets)
- Injection of a local anesthetic into the gums near the jaw
- Regular cleaning of teeth or implants if bleeding is anticipated

These are guidelines only because limited data is available on the topic. As always, discuss the appropriate treatment plan with your dentist.