BRUSH UP
A quarterly brush up on your HumanaDental benefits

winter 2008

Fighting tooth decay in preschool

While oral health continues to improve for most Americans, as many as 28 percent of children aged 2 to 5 have tooth decay, a study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports. That's an increase of 4 percent from the previous study 10 years earlier.

In fact, decay is more common among young children than any other chronic illness, including asthma and diabetes. Without preventive dental care, the effects of tooth decay on a child's development can be striking, according to the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry:

- Untreated cavities in children can be associated with growth, learning and speech problems, and can result in costly emergency room visits.
- Excessive soda consumptions and babies drinking too much juice in bottles are two examples of behaviors that can lead to decay.
- Bottled water isn't fluoridated and can be an early cause of decay.
- Tooth decay is a disease that can last a lifetime.
- Improper oral hygiene can increase the risk of developing heart disease, suffering a stroke, or having low birth-weight babies as an adult.

Five ways to help prevent early decay

1. Brush your child's gums twice a day with a soft cloth or baby toothbrush and water even before the teeth come in.
2. Focus on fluoride.
3. Have your child brush after breakfast and before bed.
4. Visit the dentist before your child's first birthday.
5. Take care of your own smile; be a role model.

Source: American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry

HUMANA DENTAL

HumanaDental.com
1-800-233-4013

Stress takes a toll on your teeth, too

Minimize your stress and you may lower your risk for periodontal disease.

The *Journal of Periodontology* reports that 57 percent of the studies reviewed showed a positive relationship between periodontal disease and psychological factors such as stress, distress, anxiety, depression and loneliness. People with high stress levels may pay less attention to their oral hygiene and increase their use of nicotine, alcohol or drugs.

Researchers speculate that the hormone cortisol may play a role in the possible connection. One study showed increased levels of cortisol can lead to more destruction of the gums and bone due to periodontal diseases.

Some healthy ways to relieve stress: exercise, a proper diet, lots of sleep, and a positive attitude.

Q: Can I view my spouse's claim history?

A: Because of privacy laws, you cannot view information about a spouse or dependent over age 18. With the member's permission, another person on the plan (age 18 or older) can view the page and even perform functions on the member's behalf. To allow access, members simply log in to **HumanaDental.com**, click on "My Profile" and then "Manage Family Member Access."

Put an end to the daily grind

Bruxism – unintentionally grinding and clenching your teeth too hard and too often – can wear down your teeth, damage gums and cause facial pain. Unfortunately, bruxism often isn't diagnosed until it's too late because "bruxers" may not even know they have the habit: It frequently occurs during sleep.

Symptoms of bruxism may include:

- Teeth grinding that may be loud enough to disturb your sleep partner
- Worn down or chipped teeth
- Sore or painful jaw
- Headache
- Earache
- Chronic facial pain

See your dentist if you suspect you have bruxism, which can have a number of psychological and physical causes ranging from stress to an abnormal bite. Using alcohol, caffeine and nicotine seems to increase the risk of bruxism.

If you grind your teeth during sleep, your dentist may custom fit a special mouth guard, called a nocturnal bite plate or bite splint, to absorb the force of biting and minimize tooth damage. Other dental work or treatment may be needed.

Be aware that your dental plan may not cover bruxism treatment, as well as related issues such as temporomandibular joint (TMJ) disorders. As always, check your coverage details document or call HumanaDental Customer Care with your pretreatment plan for an estimate.

GN-50303-HD 12/07