

Welcome to the October - December '08 issue of **CIGNA Healthful Hints**, a quarterly e-bulletin that features national health news and trends that affect the communities we call home. You'll find healthy tips and advice from professionals in group insurance, dental care and vision care.

Whether a news item in *CIGNA Healthful Hints* sparks a story idea for your employee publication or intranet, we are confident the information will be useful as you prepare health and benefit-related stories. *CIGNA Healthful Hints* is written in a style that allows you to lift items directly for placement in a variety of mediums.

If you would like additional information, would like to be removed from this distribution or have someone added to the list, please contact us at [CIGNA Healthful Hints](#).

We look forward to keeping you apprised of developments in the benefits arena and welcome your comments.

## CIGNA Healthful Hints

October – December 2008

This edition includes the following **healthful hints**:

- **Fluoride. It does your teeth good.**
- **Keeping their eyes on the candy**
- **Don't fall victim to oral cancer**
- **Avoid a holiday mishap**

**Fluoride. It does your teeth good.** – Just like your body needs calcium to strengthen bones, your teeth need fluoride to keep the enamel strong. Fluoride, which prevents and even reverses the early stages of tooth decay, is a natural element of the earth that benefits people of all ages.

“Drinking water that contains fluoride and brushing your teeth twice daily with a toothpaste that contains fluoride are excellent ways to prevent tooth decay,” said Dr. Miles Hall, chief clinical director for CIGNA Dental. “Children between the ages of two and six, should use only a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste because too much can cause light spots on permanent teeth.”

According to the American Dental Association (ADA), water fluoridation can prevent tooth decay by 20 to 40 percent. Today, 67 percent of the U.S. population can get the optimal level of fluoride from public water supplies, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Some home filtration systems can reduce the level of fluoride in your tap water. The ADA recommends people check with the manufacturer or have the fluoride level checked annually. The ADA also warns that people who primarily drink bottled water may not be receiving the optimum levels of fluoride. To find out if your water is fluoridated, contact your local water supplier, bottled water company or home filtration system manufacturer.

In addition to water and toothpaste, people can find fluoride in mouthwashes and as a natural supplement in the form of drops or tablets – talk to your dentist for the recommended amount.

For more information on fluoride, log on to the ADA's website at [www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org).

**Keeping their eyes on the candy** – “Costume. *Check*. Trick-or-Treat bag. *Check*. Flashlight. *Check*.” This Halloween parents will make sure their little ones have everything they need for their big night out, but do they know their checklist should include good vision?

According to Prevent Blindness America, more than 12.1 million school-age children, or one in four, have a vision impairment. Among preschool-age children, more than one in 20 have a vision problem that can cause permanent sight loss if left untreated.

“It’s important your child has a comprehensive eye exam by an optometrist or ophthalmologist at the age of three and then again at five or before he or she starts kindergarten,” said Dr. Denis Humphreys, director of optometric quality for CIGNA Vision. “Doctors of optometry can determine how a child’s eyes are developing by comparing the two test results in addition to screening for any possible eye diseases or testing to see if your child can see clearly.”

A few other vision-friendly tips to keep your ghosts and goblins safe this Halloween include:

- Consider painting your child’s face instead of wearing a mask.
- If your child is wearing a mask, make sure the mask doesn’t block his or her vision.
- Leave any costume accessories like a sword or wand at home because they could cause a possible eye injury.
- Be sure you or your child has a flashlight to see clearly, and to help drivers see him or her coming.
- Include reflective tape somewhere on your child’s costume or trick-or-treat bag so he or she can be seen.

Each fall, let Halloween serve as a reminder to schedule your child’s annual eye exam. For more information on vision eye exams, log on to the American Optometric Association at [www.aoa.org](http://www.aoa.org).

**Don’t fall victim to oral cancer** – According to the Oral Cancer Foundation, every 20 minutes someone is diagnosed with oral cancer and every hour someone dies from the disease in the United States. Most people diagnosed with oral cancer tend to be over the age of 40 and use tobacco, however oral cancer can strike at any age whether you are a tobacco user or not.

Smoker or non-smoker, Dr. Michael Kahn, chair of Tufts Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology and a member of the CIGNA Dental Clinical Advisory Panel\* advises everyone should be aware of the following signs and symptoms of oral cancer:

- Patches inside the mouth, or on the lips, that are red, white or a mixture of red and white that last longer than two weeks and cannot be wiped off (white patches are the most common, and sometimes become malignant; red patches more frequently become malignant)
- Sores on the lip that won’t heal
- Lump on the neck
- Unexplained earache
- Pain, tenderness or numbness anywhere in the mouth or on the lips
- Difficulty chewing, swallowing, or moving the jaw or tongue

“If you have one or more of these signs, it does not necessarily mean it’s cancer, but you should contact your dentist to be examined,” says Dr. Kahn. “Also, be sure when you go to the dentist, once a year he or she does an oral cancer exam. If for any reason there is something in your mouth that looks suspicious during the oral cancer examination, your dentist will most definitely do some further testing to rule out cancer as a possibility.

If you are a smoker, consider participating in the Great American Smokeout, Nov. 20, Go to [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org) for more information. To learn more about oral cancer, log on to [www.oralcancerfoundation.org](http://www.oralcancerfoundation.org).

**Avoid a holiday mishap** – According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), each year during November and December about 10,000 people are treated in hospital emergency rooms as a result of falls, cuts, shocks and burns related to holiday decorating.

"The last place anyone wants to spend their time during the holidays is in the emergency room," said Dan Berenbaum, senior director of accident and specialty for CIGNA Group Insurance. "It's important to keep safety a priority when decorating because an accident could not only potentially put a damper on your holiday, but you could feel the affects well into the New Year."

If you like to decorate in a big way during the holidays below are some tips from the CPSC to keep in mind to avoid a holiday disaster:

- Use decorative lights that have been tested by a nationally recognized testing laboratory.
- Turn off holiday lights when you go to bed or are not at home.
- Keep candles away from items that could catch fire easily and away from a child's reach.
- Never leave a candle unattended and extinguish it before you leave the room.
- Purchase a holiday tree that's labeled "fire resistant" to lower the risk of it catching fire.
- If you buy a live tree, be sure to select a fresh one.

For more information on how to keep your holidays safe, log on to the CPSC at [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov)

**\*About the CIGNA Dental Clinical Advisory Panel** – To facilitate the creation of innovative approaches to emerging issues related to developing technologies, medical/dental integration and evidence-based strategies, CIGNA Dental has organized an independent panel of well-known, clinical experts in dentistry. The CIGNA Dental Clinical Advisory Panel consists of leaders in the dental profession, many of whom are published and have served in leadership roles within their specialty or the American Dental Association. Several panel members have current academic appointments in major schools of dentistry, including the University of PA, Tufts, SUNY, and UCLA.

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