

Welcome to your first issue of **CIGNA Healthful Hints**, a quarterly e-bulletin brought to your desktop by CIGNA Dental & Vision Care. *CIGNA Healthful Hints* features national health news and trends that affect the communities we call home, as well as healthy tips from dental and vision care professionals.

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. Written objectively in a succinct yet colorful style, *CIGNA Healthful Hints* 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](#)

On behalf of CIGNA Dental & Vision Care, enjoy your first issue of *CIGNA Healthful Hints*. We look forward to keeping you apprised of developments in the health arena and welcome your comments.

CIGNA Healthful Hints

October-December 2007

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

- The Misfit School Tool: A Travel Toothbrush
- “Spooky” Facts About Oral Health
- Open Wide and Have a Look Inside...It Could Save Your Life
- Give the Gift of Oral Health This Holiday Season

The Misfit School Tool: A Travel Toothbrush – A calculator, ruler, pencils and a *toothbrush*? Even though school has been underway for a few months, parents may have overlooked one very important item to pack in their child’s backpack – a travel toothbrush. Believe it or not, this simple tool could save their child from heart disease later in life.

“A new study in the September 2007 issue of *Heart* suggests young adults who lose their teeth to cavities or gum disease may have an increased risk of dying from heart disease later in life,” said Tom Floyd, D.M.D., pediatric dentist and a member of the CIGNA Dental Clinical Advisory Panel. “This recent study reemphasizes the importance of oral health at all ages. Helping to instill healthy habits in your children now, means better teeth and overall health for tomorrow.” Dr. Floyd recommends parents encourage their child to store a travel toothbrush and toothpaste in his or her school locker or cubby so it’s available to use after a snack or lunch.

The American Dental Association (ADA) recommends people brush their teeth twice a day with an ADA-accepted fluoride toothpaste and floss their teeth daily to remove plaque between teeth and under the gum line. A toothbrush should be replaced when the bristles begin to fray or every three to four months, so it’s doing the best job it can.

In addition to brushing and flossing, healthy eating habits play a role in children’s dental health. Dr. Floyd provides the following diet and nutrition tips for children and parents:

- *Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables* – Children who practice better eating habits have a lower risk of developing cavities.
- *Include cheese on the menu* – Cheese provides calcium and stimulates saliva production to protect against cavities. Minerals in cheese help fight decay-promoting acid in the mouth.
- *Try to avoid sticky foods* – Fruit roll-ups, chewy fruit snacks and candy stick to teeth and are hard to clean off.
- *Drink plenty of milk* – Milk, without chocolate and strawberry flavorings added, helps strengthen teeth and bones.
- *Limit soda, juices and sports drinks* – Soda has up to 10 teaspoons of sugar per can and acid that weakens teeth. Juices and sports drinks can also be high in sugar.
- *Drink water* – Water is the best liquid to drink between meals and at bedtime.

“Parents can help with creating healthy oral health habits by setting a good example,” said Dr. Floyd. “Be sure to let your children know that you are taking a travel toothbrush with you to work and praise them for taking good care of their teeth and in turn their future health.” Visit the CIGNA website for [more information on caring for your teeth](#).

“Spooky” Facts About Oral Health – With Halloween around the corner, children across the country are counting down the days to dressing up as little ghosts and goblins and indulging in all of the goodies they collect in their trick-or-treat bags. Their parents however, are “spooked” about their child’s next visit to the dentist.

According to the Surgeon General, tooth decay, also known as cavities, affects one-fourth of American children ages two to five-years-old and is the single most common chronic childhood disease. It’s five times more common than asthma and seven times more common than hay fever.

So what can people do to help children have a healthy Halloween? For starters, giving out “treats” doesn’t mean they necessarily have to be sticky, sugary candy. Some alternatives:

- Stickers
- Crayons
- Colored chalk
- Whistles
- Toothbrushes
- Sugar-free gum
- Packets of hot chocolate
- Small packages of raisins

Parents can take steps year round to help their children practice good oral health. “Good oral hygiene should start even before your baby’s first tooth comes in,” said Tom Floyd, D.M.D., pediatric dentist and a member of the CIGNA Dental Clinical Advisory Panel. “There are several preventive measures parents can take to help keep their child’s mouth healthy.”

Dr. Floyd provides the following hygiene tips for parents:

- Serve as a good role model by practicing good oral health care habits yourself.
- Make sure your child brushes his/her teeth before bed. Nighttime brushing is most important to remove food and bacteria from the day.
- Floss your child’s teeth daily to remove food impacted between teeth. If you can see gums between the teeth, there’s no need to floss.
- When your child is old enough to spit out toothpaste, often by age two or three, use fluoride toothpaste with the American Dental Association (ADA) seal of acceptance.
- Schedule regular dental visits for family checkups, periodontal (gum) evaluations, and cleanings.
- Ensure your child is eating a healthy and balanced diet.
- Check your child’s mouth for the signs of gum disease, including bleeding gums, swollen and bright red gums, gums that are receding away from the teeth, and bad breath.

“Your child should see a dentist by his or her first birthday, or earlier if the first tooth appears,” said Dr. Floyd. “Both children and adults should see a dentist every six months for routine cleanings and check-ups.”

More and more adolescents are consuming soft drinks that can attack the enamel, increasing decay risk. So, in addition to regular brushing and flossing, Dr. Floyd suggests adolescents use a straw when drinking a soda so their teeth are exposed less to the sugar. It’s also a good practice to rinse with water after drinking a soda. In addition, he suggests limiting the frequency of sugary snacks throughout the day to help reduce decay. “It’s especially important to take these extra preventive measures if you have braces because they may trap plaque on your teeth,” said Dr. Floyd.

Visit CIGNA's website [for more information on caring for your children's teeth or for a video demonstration](#) of how to brush and floss your teeth.

Open Wide and Have a Look Inside...It Could Save Your Life – Did you know according to the Surgeon General every year 30,200 people in the United States, including tobacco users and non-tobacco users, are diagnosed with oral and throat (pharynx) cancers and 7,800 of those cases result in death?

“In addition to harming nearly every organ in the body, use of tobacco in all forms can also harm your mouth and throat,” said Dr. Kahn, D.D.S., Chair of Tufts Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology and a member of the CIGNA Dental Clinical Advisory Panel. “Oral cancer is the sixth deadliest cancer in the United States and it’s estimated that 75 percent of oral and throat cancers are tobacco-related. It’s important both smokers and non-smokers go for regular dental appointments so their dentists can identify and treat early stages of oral cancer or pre-cancerous conditions if needed.”

During an oral cancer exam your dentist will examine your entire mouth, particularly the roof of your mouth, insides of your cheeks and the sides and underneath your tongue. Dr. Kahn says it's important that people are aware of the potential signs and symptoms of oral cancer, which may include:

- Patches inside the mouth, or on the lips, that are red, white or a mixture of red and white (white patches are the most common, and sometimes become malignant)
- Sores on the lip that won't heal
- Lump on the neck
- 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 is cancer, but Dr. Kahn suggests you contact your dentist to be examined.

Oral and throat cancer is just another reason why tobacco users should quit. When you stop smoking chances of getting other cancers are decreased. You are no longer risking the health of others around you with second-hand smoke. You'll also save money, set a good example for your children and help improve your overall appearance. "It's never too late to quit smoking. Every day without smoking provides health benefits," said Dr. Kahn. "Within just two to three months of quitting smoking your circulation improves and your lung function increases, and after 10 years your risk of mouth and throat cancer decreases."

If you are a smoker, consider participating in the Great American Smoke Out Nov. 15. This is a day designated by the American Cancer Society to help encourage smokers to quit for even one day in the hopes they will quit for good and improve their overall health. For more information on the Great American Smoke Out, log on to www.cancer.org. To find out more about resources that can support a journey to quitting, log on to the Department of Health and Human Services at www.smokefree.gov or call the National Network of Tobacco Cessation Quitline at 800.QUITNOW or 800.784.8669.

Give the Gift of Oral Health This Holiday Season – It's the most wonderful time of the year...to give a holiday gift that is different from years past and contributes to your loved one's health in the New Year. This holiday season consider giving your family or friends gifts that will help protect their teeth.

"Xylitol is a natural sugar found in fruits and vegetables that helps to stop acid producing bacteria that can cause cavities and increases saliva production, which protects your teeth," said Dr. Miles Hall, D.D.S., chief clinical director for CIGNA Dental. "There are products available such as gum, mints and mouthwash containing xylitol that can help prevent cavities."

Another item that can help protect teeth is a Sonicare® toothbrush. Sonicare toothbrushes were inspired by dental equipment and are highly recommended by dentists. Some health plans, like CIGNA, offer members discounts on various products and services. Through CIGNA Healthy Rewards®, members can save up to 50 percent on Epic™ products which contain xylitol. Members can save up to 31 percent on the Sonicare Essence 5300 toothbrush.

In addition to toothbrushes and xylitol products, consider bringing meat and cheese platters or vegetable trays to holiday parties instead of sugar cookies, fudge and candy. "If you are hosting or attending a party, save your friends and family from all of the excess holiday sugars with healthy alternatives," said Dr. Hall. "You can create a festive and appetizing treat for party goers with items like fruit, nuts, cheese, crackers and puddings or yogurts that are low in sugar."

CIGNA's website has more information about [CIGNA's Healthy Rewards program](#). CIGNA members can also visit myCIGNA.com or call 1.800.870.3470 with questions.

If you would like to schedule an interview with any of CIGNA's dental experts, please contact Jill Roman, public relations director for CIGNA Dental, at 215.761.1489 or jill.roman@cigna.com.

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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