



ANTIBIOTIC PROPHYLAXIS

Antibiotic prophylaxis is medicine that a dental patient takes before certain dental procedures. The precautionary medicine protects the natural bacteria in our mouths from getting into our bloodstreams, where it can affect our heart and other organs. A healthy immune system prevents mouth bacteria from causing harm elsewhere in the body, but other individuals may need the extra protection.

Dentists ask patients to take antibiotic prophylaxis if they have heart issues, compromised immune systems (such as patients with diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, or cancer), and are undergoing chemotherapy. Be sure to let your dentist know your full medical history, including any of these conditions, so that you can be protected before your next dental cleaning or procedure.

Guidance from the American Heart Association specifies that individuals with the following heart conditions should take antibiotics prior to dental care:

- Artificial heart valves
- A history of an infection of the lining of the heart or heart valves known as infective endocarditis, a life-threatening condition
- A heart transplant with a problem with a heart valve
- Heart conditions that are present from birth, such as:
 - Unrepaired cyanotic congenital heart disease, including people with palliative shunts and conduit.
 - Defects repaired with a prosthetic material or device during the first six months after repair.
 - Cases in which a heart defect was repaired with a prosthetic patch or device, but a residual defect remains at or near the site.¹

Most dental patients with orthopedic implants such as joint replacements no longer need to take antibiotic prophylaxis, according to the American Dental Association (ADA). The ADA reviewed the scientific literature and determined that dental procedures are not associated with prosthetic joint implant infections, and that antibiotic prophylaxis given to those patients before dental visits do not prevent such infections.

24/7 Emergency Contact Number: 1-888-295-5156

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Risks

For most people, the known risks of taking antibiotics may outweigh the uncertain benefits.

Risks related to taking antibiotic prophylaxis are nausea, upset stomach, and allergic reactions, including anaphylactic shock, a severe allergic reaction that can be life threatening. Patients over 70 years old are at increased risk of experiencing adverse reactions to some antibiotics.²

Bacteria can develop antibiotic resistance, which can complicate treatment of strep throat, pink eye, and meningitis. Developing antibiotic resistance can also increase the risk of *C. difficile* infection, which causes diarrhea and other intestinal problems. Despite all of these risks, taking recommended antibiotic prophylaxis before dental visits usually has few, if any, adverse effects and protects the patient.

For more information

For more information, contact the Division of Public Health, Bureau of Oral Health and Dental Services, at 302-622-4540 and www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/hsm/ohphome.html.

Resources

1. American Dental Association. 2020. *Antibiotic Prophylaxis for Heart Patients*. In Mouth Healthy. Retrieved July 17, 2020 from <https://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/a/premedication-or-antibiotics>
2. American Dental Association. 2020. *Antibiotic Prophylaxis and Joint Replacement*. In Mouth Healthy. Retrieved July 17, 2020 from <https://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/a/joint-replacement>