



**University Hospitals
Bristol and Weston**
NHS Foundation Trust

Patient information service
Bristol Dental Hospital

Dental screening for cardiac patients



This leaflet is designed to give you information about dental screening and treatment as part of your admission for cardiac surgery.

Please read this leaflet carefully.

Why have I been sent for a dental check?

Your cardiac team have referred you for a dental check prior to potential procedure on your heart.

This is because certain types of procedure can place patients at risk of developing a condition called infective endocarditis from dental issues or dental treatment.

It is therefore important that your mouth is checked by a dentist before your procedure, to plan if any dental treatment is needed to help reduce the chance of developing infective endocarditis.

What is infective endocarditis?

Infective endocarditis (IE) is an infection of the lining of the heart.

It is a rare but serious condition (affecting less than 1 case per 10,000 individuals per year in the general population).

IE is caused by bacteria that enter the bloodstream and this can affect the valves on your heart.

In some cases, the bacteria can come from your mouth, especially if there is lots of decay in your teeth and your mouth is unhealthy.

Am I at risk of infective endocarditis?

IE can affect anyone in the population. However, people who have certain heart problems are more at risk of developing it.

These include:

- diseases that affect heart valves
- having a replacement heart valve
- a condition called hypertrophic cardiomyopathy
- a history of previous IE
- congenital heart disease (even if you have already had an operation to correct the problem).

Can I reduce my risk of developing infective endocarditis?

You can reduce your risk of developing IE by:

- **Looking after your oral health.**
 - Clean your teeth twice a day with a toothpaste containing fluoride.
 - Have regular dental check-ups with your general dental practitioner (GDP).
 - Cut down on sugary drinks and food.
 - Do not smoke.
 - Cut down on the amount of alcohol you drink.
 - Taking care of your skin.
- **Regularly wash your skin with soap and water.**
- **Wash any cuts and grazes carefully to prevent them becoming infected.**

- **Avoid non-medical procedures that involve piercing the skin like tattoos and body piercings.**

What will my dental check involve?

The dental check aims to identify potential dental issues in people who are or will be at risk of IE, so where possible, they are made dentally fit before their procedure.

The appointment will involve you having a dental check by a member of the Special Care Dental (SCD) team.

This will involve an examination and pictures (radiographs) of your teeth.

If the dentist finds any issues within your mouth, they will talk to you about their findings and potential treatment options to help stabilise your oral health.

If treatment is required, they will liaise with your cardiology team to make sure this is carried out in a safe and timely manner.

Sometimes, your cardiology team may recommend that you have antibiotics before your planned treatment.

What dental treatment can I have done with the special care dental team?

Every effort will be made to ensure all urgent treatment is carried out in a timely manner before your procedure.

Screening is a one-off assessment and following completion of the assessment and any treatment required to make you dentally fit, you will be discharged from our care.

There are situations where due to timings and staff availability, that this may not be possible.

The special care dentist will talk to you about how to care for your mouth and what you can do at home to make sure your mouth is healthy.

They may also prescribe a high fluoride toothpaste for you to start brushing with.

If a tooth has poor long-term prognosis or is an infection risk, the dentist may recommend a dental extraction.

Dental extractions can typically be organised with our oral surgery (OS) colleagues at Bristol Dental Hospital.

Treatment is normally carried out under local anaesthetic (LA) and only in extreme circumstance can we facilitate sedation or putting you to sleep (general anaesthetic) for your treatment.

All non-urgent treatment like cleaning and fillings will only be carried out if there is capacity to do so within our department and enough time before your procedure.

We will otherwise liaise with your general dental practitioner (GDP) for them to complete the non-urgent treatment.

We will signpost you as to how to access a GDP if you are not registered with one.

If you choose not to have any dental treatment proposed, the

dentist will inform your cardiology team of your decision and we will discharge you from our care.

Does all dental treatment come with a risk of infective endocarditis?

Not all dental treatment poses a risk of IE.

Common invasive dental procedures that pose of risk of IE are:

- dental extractions
- fillings below the gum line
- cleaning below the gum line
- screening to assess the health below your gumline
- the use of dental equipment that extends below the gum line.

What are the symptoms of infective endocarditis?

Please contact your GP or cardiology team immediately if you notice you have:

- a high temperature (above 38C)
- sweats or chills (especially at night)
- breathlessness (especially during exercise)
- weight loss
- tiredness

- muscle or joint pain (unrelated to physical activity).

These symptoms are more likely to be caused by a less serious type of infection.

However, given your heart condition, your doctor may want to investigate this further.

It is important you let them know about any recent dental treatment you have had.

Sources of advice and support

Speak to your GP or cardiology team if you have any questions or queries.

The dentist who you see for your screen will be happy to answer any questions you may have about dental treatment.

Alternatively, you can look at the following websites.

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence



www.nice.org.uk

Oral Health Foundation



<https://www.dentalhealth.org/>

British Heart Foundation



www.bhf.org.uk

Scottish Dental Clinical Effectiveness Programme



www.sdcep.org.uk

Notes

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As well as providing clinical care, our Trust has an important role in research. This allows us to discover new and improved ways of treating patients.

While under our care, you may be invited to take part in research. To find out more please visit: www.uhbw.nhs.uk

Help us prevent the spread of infection in hospital. Please make sure your hands are clean. Wash and dry them thoroughly/use the gel provided. If you have been unwell in the last 48 hours please consider whether your visit is essential.

Smoking is the primary cause of preventable illness and premature death. For support in stopping smoking contact **NHS Smokefree on 0300 123 1044.**

Drinkline is the national alcohol helpline. If you're worried about your own or someone else's drinking, you can call this free helpline in complete confidence. **Drinkline on 0300 123 1110.**

For access all patient leaflets and information please go to the following address:
<http://foi.avon.nhs.uk/>

Bristol switchboard: 0117 923 0000
Weston switchboard: 01934 636 363
www.uhbw.nhs.uk



For an interpreter or signer, please contact the telephone number on your appointment letter.



For this leaflet in large print or PDF format, please email patientleaflets@uhbw.nhs.uk.

