



Health Alert

New Guidelines on Antibiotics and Your Heart from the American Heart Association

The American Heart Association has reversed its prior recommendations that patients with certain heart conditions take antibiotics shortly before dental treatment. These recommendations were based on the belief that antibiotics would prevent infective endocarditis, also referred to as bacterial endocarditis (BE). (BE is an infection of the heart's inner lining or valves, which results when bacteria enter the bloodstream and travel to the heart. Bacteria normally are found in various sites of the body, including on the skin and in the mouth.)

The American Heart Association's Endocarditis Committee, together with national and international experts on BE, extensively reviewed published studies in order to determine whether dental, gastrointestinal (GI), or genitourinary (GU) tract procedures are possible causes of BE. These experts determined that there is no conclusive evidence that links dental, GI, or GU tract procedures with the development of BE.

However, the Committee cannot exclude the possibility that an exceedingly small number of cases, if any, of BE may be prevented by taking an antibiotic prior to a dental procedure. These conditions are shown below.

The current practice of giving patients antibiotics prior to a dental procedure is no longer recommended EXCEPT for patients with the highest risk of adverse outcomes resulting from BE. These conditions include:

- Prosthetic cardiac valve

- Previous endocarditis
- Congenital heart disease only in the following categories:

Unrepaired cyanotic congenital heart disease, including those with palliative shunts and conduits

Completely repaired congenital heart disease with prosthetic material or device, whether placed by surgery or catheter intervention, during the first six months after the procedure*

Repaired congenital heart disease with residual defects at the site or adjacent to the site of a prosthetic patch or prosthetic device (which inhibit endothelialization)

- Cardiac transplantation recipients with cardiac valvular disease

* Prophylaxis is recommended because endothelialization of prosthetic material occurs within six months after the procedure.

The dental procedures for which a preventive antibiotic is recommended in patients with cardiac conditions listed above are:

All dental procedures that involve manipulation of gingival tissue or the periapical region of teeth, or perforation of the oral mucosa.

Preventive antibiotics are NOT recommended for the following dental procedures or events:

- Routine anesthetic injections through non-infected tissue
- Taking dental radiographs; placement of removable prosthodontic or orthodontic appliances
- Adjustment of orthodontic appliances
- Placement of orthodontic brackets
- Shedding of deciduous teeth and bleeding from trauma to the lips or oral mucosa.

As reported in: [The Journal of the American Dental Association, June 2007](#)