

### New Guidelines on Using Antibiotics to Prevent Infective Endocarditis

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#### New Guidelines on Using Antibiotics to Prevent Infective Endocarditis

Have you ever been given antibiotics one hour before having your teeth scaled? If so, please read on.

You probably have one of the following conditions:

- \* acquired valvular heart defect with stenosis or regurgitation
- \* valve replacement
- \* structural congenital heart defect
- \* A history of endocarditis

If you have one of these conditions you run the risk of suffering from a condition called infective endocarditis.

Infective endocarditis is an inflammation of part of the lining of the heart chambers. It may be caused by infection from the bacteria which inhabit various parts of your body, if they gain access to the bloodstream. Some cases of infective endocarditis may be caused by the bacteria which are found on the teeth. Although infective endocarditis is a rare condition, it is, nevertheless a life-threatening disease.

For many years, dentists have given antibiotics to at-risk patients before scaling, tooth extractions or surgical procedures. In doing this, we have been following national guidelines in the belief that the antibiotics will kill any bacteria which enter your bloodstream during treatment, and this will help to prevent infective endocarditis from developing.

Recently, however, the national guidelines have changed and antibiotics are no longer advised.

Here are a few recently collected facts to help you understand why the guidelines have changed.

- \* Infective endocarditis can arise from the bacteria that are in your mouth if they should gain access to your bloodstream. However, there is no evidence that this is more likely to happen during a visit to the dentist than during normal daily activity such as eating and toothbrushing.
- \* There is also no evidence that patients who have antibiotics before dental treatment are less likely to develop infective endocarditis than patients who have dental treatment without antibiotics.
- \* It has been estimated that the risk of serious side effects from the antibiotics are far greater than the risk of contracting infective endocarditis following treatment without antibiotics.

If you are affected by one of the heart conditions mentioned at the top of the page, it is very important to achieve and maintain healthy teeth and gums to prevent infective endocarditis from developing. Therefore, it is important that you complete your treatment at our surgery and follow the advice that you are given. If you require scaling or surgery as part of your treatment, this will, in future, normally be provided without antibiotics.

If you have any other concerns about the issues that have been raised by the above article please do not hesitate to ask.

**Dated 9th January 2013**