

# Changes to your [Antibiotic Cover]

## Advice to prevent infective endocarditis

Advice from your dentist and doctor on how to best prevent infective endocarditis has changed. If you have been taking antibiotics for any dental work you **may not** need to take them anymore. This leaflet will explain the changes but please discuss any concerns with your dentist or doctor.

## What is infective endocarditis?

Infective endocarditis is a serious and potentially life-threatening illness. It is an infection of the heart valves or the lining of the heart. The infection gets to the heart when bacteria are carried there in the blood stream. Large numbers of bacteria may get into the blood stream in several ways, most commonly through the mouth and with dental work.

Only **some** people with heart conditions need to take antibiotics for dental work to reduce their chance of getting this heart infection.

## Who should have antibiotic cover?

Infective endocarditis is rare but is more common in people with certain heart conditions. You are at risk of infective endocarditis and will need antibiotic cover if you have:

- Had a heart valve replacement
- Rheumatic heart disease (rheumatic fever that has affected your heart)
- Had infective endocarditis before
- A heart condition you were born with that has been repaired in the last six months or is unrepaired (this includes palliative shunts and conduits).

**In the past**, you may have had antibiotics for your heart condition but unless your heart condition is in the group of four above, you now **no longer need** antibiotic cover. This is because there is no clear evidence of benefit from antibiotics in such conditions. The risks of taking preventive antibiotics outweigh the benefits for most people.

## When should you have antibiotic cover?

You should have antibiotic cover for the following:

- Certain types of dental treatment (your dentist will know which treatments require cover)
- Any surgery anywhere in the body where there is already an infection.

You **do not** need antibiotics for losing your milk teeth, dental x-rays, work on orthodontic braces, anaesthetic injections, or biting/trauma to your lip or tongue.

## Keeping your mouth healthy

Keeping your teeth and gums healthy is a very important part of reducing your risk of developing infective endocarditis. If you don't look after your teeth, the chance of bacteria getting into your blood stream from your mouth is much higher than if you keep your teeth healthy.

You can reduce your risk of developing infective endocarditis by:

- Having dental check-ups every six months
- Brushing your teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste
- Using dental floss daily to clean between your teeth.

## Carry this card

If you are at risk of infective endocarditis, please carry an 'Advice to Prevent Infective Endocarditis' wallet card with you. Please ask your dentist, dental therapist or doctor for one of these cards.



**For more information about heart health and/or supporting the Heart Foundation, please contact:**

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