

FOR THE TEAMSTERSCARE DENTAL PATIENT . . .

New guidelines from the American Heart Association

Antibiotics and your heart

TeamstersCare Dental Offices follow the American Heart Association (AHA) recommendations concerning patients with certain heart conditions. Until recently, the AHA has recommended that certain patients take antibiotics shortly before dental treatment. This was done with the belief that the antibiotics would prevent infective endocarditis (IE), basically a heart infection, which may result when bacteria normally found in the mouth travel to the heart.

Scientists have found no compelling evidence that taking antibiotics before a dental procedure prevents a heart infection in patients who are at risk of developing one from dental procedures. Since the risks involved with taking antibiotics can be greater than the benefits, the AHA revised their guidelines for premedication in April 2007.

The new guidelines state that patients who may have taken prophylactic antibiotics in the past but no longer need them include people with:

- mitral valve prolapse
- rheumatic heart disease
- bicuspid valve disease
- calcified aortic stenosis, or
- congenital (present from birth) heart conditions; such as ventricular septal defect, atrial septal defect and hypertrophic cardiomyopathy.

The new guidelines are aimed at protecting patients who would have the greatest danger of a bad outcome if they developed a heart infection after dental treatment.

Therefore, preventive antibiotics before a dental procedure are still advised for patients with:

- artificial heart valves
- a history of infective endocarditis
- certain specific, serious congenital (from birth) heart conditions, or
- a cardiac transplantation that develops a problem in a heart valve.

Patients with certain heart conditions from birth have complicated circumstances. They should check with their cardiologist to determine if their condition is one that requires antibiotics before dental treatment.

The new AHA guidelines emphasize that maintaining optimal oral health and practicing daily oral hygiene are more important in reducing the risk of an infection in the heart than is taking preventive antibiotics before a dental visit.

For more information, please speak with one of our TeamstersCare dentists or visit: www.ada.org.