

*Important Concerns Associated with Dental Treatment For Children Born
With Congenital Heart Defects*

Dental Patients with certain heart abnormalities must receive the protection of an antibiotic regimen before any type of dental treatment is provided. This includes simple procedures like cleaning and polishing the teeth because even cleaning can cause bacteria to be released into the bloodstream through the gums. In patients that have heart defects these bacteria can settle in the heart and cause an infections called Sub acute Bacterial Endocarditis (SBE), this is a serious and sometimes life threatening condition. However, patients with heart conditions can be treated safely if properly pre-medicated with antibiotics before dental treatment.

Certain syndromes carry a high risk of heart abnormalities. Downs Syndrome patients are particularly more likely to require antibiotics before dental treatment because 40 to 50 percent of them are born with cardiac anomalies and approximately 50 percent of Downs patients develop a heart conditions known as Mitro Valve Prolapse (MVP) as they approach adulthood.

This condition (MVP) can go undetected because approximately one third of the cases cannot be detected by a simple stethoscope examination and may require an echocardiogram.

The patient's medical doctor will inform the parents as to what type, if any, heart problem exist and the parents must be sure to inform the treating dentist so that the patient can be properly medicated before any dental procedure is performed that could cause SBE.

A parent seeking dental care should ask the dental office if they encourage or routinely treat patients with special needs. Dentists who have specialize in Pediatric Dentistry have routinely attended at least two years after dental school to learn how to care for the special needs of children and particularly children who are born with special needs. They also have the staff, which is skilled in providing the appropriate care for these parents.

It is important that all children, particularly those with special needs be seen early and routinely by those dental providers who are properly trained. It is wise to call the dental office to inquire if the dentist will accept patients with special needs. The recommended first visit for all children is before their first birthday. There is much documentation to support the fact that children who are seen early and regularly be the dentist have fewer dental problems and their dental cost over their lifetime is significantly less than children who are not seen until the age three or four. This is particularly true for special needs children.

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