



# Mouth care for people with bleeding disorders

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## Information for patients

This information sheet answers some of the questions you may have about looking after your mouth when you have a bleeding disorder. It explains how your bleeding disorder may affect your mouth and what things you can do to help keep your teeth and gums healthy. If you have any other questions, concerns or notice any changes in your mouth, please do not hesitate to speak to the dental team caring for you.

### **What are bleeding disorders?**

Bleeding disorders are a group of conditions that result when the blood cannot clot properly, for example, coagulation factor deficiencies, vascular disorders or fibrinolytic defects. Medication that thins blood can stop your blood from clotting and will increase the risk of bleeding.

### **Can my bleeding disorder cause problems with my mouth?**

You may notice small, circular non-raised spots called petechiae appear on or around your tongue, under your tongue, the roof of your mouth and/or on your gums. These spots can cause the gums to then bleed on their own. You may also notice that your gums are enlarged, which your dental professional will refer as a condition called gingival hyperplasia.



Petechiae (Image from pocketdentistry.com)

## **Do I need to tell my dental professional if I have a bleeding disorder?**

Yes, this is very important so they can treat you safely. Most dental care can be managed in the dental surgery for patients with bleeding disorders, but you will need to give them as much information as possible about:

- unusual bleeding
- bleeding that happens on its own
- how easy you bruise
- how often you bruise
- any medication you take
- your latest international normalised ratio (INR) records (where possible)
- details of GP and Haematology Team

## **Do I need to inform my GP if I am having dental treatment?**

Patients on anticoagulation therapy such as warfarin, rivaroxaban, dabigatran, apixaban, edoxaban and aspirin should consult their doctor before having any dental treatment. For some treatments your dental professional may refer you to a specialist. You may also need blood tests, adjustments to your medication and additional care when teeth are removed. It may be preferable to have dental extractions earlier in the day.

## **How can I look after my mouth?**

It is important to maintain good mouth care.

- Brush teeth at least twice a day (last thing at night and one other time) with a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste containing 1350 to 1500ppm of fluoride.
- Thoroughly clean teeth for at least two minutes. Carefully brush each tooth – front, back and sides, as well as the gum line.
- Spit out after brushing
- Both manual and powered toothbrushes are effective at cleaning teeth and gums. Choose one with a small head and medium bristles.
- Use dental floss or brushes that clean in between the teeth daily to remove plaque. Your dental professional can show you how to use these.
- Cut down on how much and how often you have sugary food and drink
  - ✓ fruit and vegetables are healthy snacks
  - ✓ avoid sugary drinks – milk and water are best
  - ✓ avoid sugary foods
  - ✓ use sugar-free versions of medicines if possible
- If you use a mouthwash, use it at a different time to tooth brushing. Please discuss this with your dental professional.
- Limit your intake of tobacco and alcohol to keep your gums healthy and reduce the risk of mouth cancer.
- Leave dentures out at night to help keep your mouth healthy.
- Make regular visits to the dentist.

## Where can I find out further information?

[Gum disease \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

[How to cut down on sugar in your diet \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

## References

Gupta A, Epstein JB, Cabay RJ. [Bleeding disorders of importance in dental care and related patient management](#). J Can Dent Assoc. 2007 Feb;73(1):77-83. PMID: 17295950.

[Delivering better oral health: an evidence-based toolkit for prevention \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

[World Federation of Haemophilia \(www.wfh.org\)](http://www.wfh.org)

## PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you. They can also pass on praise or thanks to our teams.

PALS at King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill, London SE5 9RS

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