

Brief Intervention Oral Health Advice

Aim- to utilise the continued and frequent contact between clients engaged in substance misuse services and community pharmacists to improve the oral health of the clients.

Key Oral Health Themes-

Toothbrushing and Toothpaste

Drinks and Snacks

Sugar Free Chewing Gum

Visiting the Dentist

Methadone

Delivering Brief Intervention -

Brief intervention strategies and programmes are designed to prompt people to think differently about their behaviours and attitudes.

Delivering oral health brief intervention advice in the pharmacy setting to methadone clients aims to increase awareness of the importance of oral health through the provision of simple key messages and practical oral health materials.

Evidence from the pilot phase reports that oral health brief intervention has increased awareness and knowledge of oral health promoting behaviours with this client group.

During the delivery of brief intervention advice it is important to acknowledge that clients will be at different stages of readiness to change or engage with the oral health messages. Some clients may not have thought about changing their oral health behaviours, some may have thought about the information but not acted upon it, while there are other clients who may be actively trying to change their oral health behaviours through brushing, reducing sugary food and drink intake and regularly visiting the dentist.

Toothbrushing and Toothpaste

What is the most effective way to use toothpaste?

- Use a dry toothbrush – do not wet the toothbrush before or after putting the toothpaste on
- Use a pea sized amount of an appropriate strength of fluoride toothpaste – around 1500ppmF for children and adults over 7 years (NB toothpaste supplied for project is 1450ppmF)
- Brush for two minutes – be sure to brush all surfaces of the teeth
- Spit out the toothpaste, rinse your brush but don't rinse your mouth – the toothpaste left on the teeth after spitting but not rinsing helps to strengthen the teeth against tooth decay

What is the advice for toothbrushing?

- Brush twice a day for two minutes
- Brush in the morning after breakfast
- Always brush last thing at night before going to bed – saliva production is reduced during sleep and therefore can't fight against acid attacks from sugar resulting in increased risk of tooth decay

What advice should I give to clients with children?

The message is the same for children, except children under 7 should use toothpaste containing around 1000ppmF. Children from birth to 2 years should use a smear of toothpaste on the toothbrush and children over 2 should use a pea size amount of toothpaste.

What is the advice about using mouthwash?*

If the client wants to use mouthwash recommend an alcohol free mouthwash that contains fluoride and explain that it should be used at an alternative time, but in addition to regular toothbrushing.

* See Methadone information sheet for further advice on the use of mouthwash

Snacks and Drinks

What happens when you snack on sugary foods and drinks?

The bacteria in our mouth feed on sugar and make acid that attacks the teeth causing tooth decay. The saliva in our mouth helps to buffer the effects of acid attacks but it takes over 30 minutes for pH of the mouth to return to normal. Continued and frequent exposure to sugars means that the mouth does not have enough time to recover between the acid attacks and this is likely to result in high levels of decay.

What is the advice for preventing decay and caries?

Reduce the *amount* and *frequency* of sugar in the diet.

Always try to choose SUGAR FREE drinks and snacks between meals.

What advice can I give to clients about reducing their sugar intake?

Try swapping high sugary foods for low sugar options for example:

- Swap biscuits and cakes for bread, rolls, crumpets, pitta bread, scones or crackers
- Swap sweets and chocolates for sugar free options
- Swap snacks to any kind of fruit and raw vegetables, nuts or carbohydrate based foods.

Encourage the consumption of more fruit and vegetables as snacks as these do not cause tooth decay

What is the advice about drinks?

Water and milk are the safest drinks for your teeth.

Drinking tea and coffee with no sugar is also better for your teeth.

Try to reducing fizzy juice consumption between meals and try to only have juice drinks at meal times as this will cut down the risk of tooth decay.

Drink through a straw, with the straw placed to the back of the mouth to reduce the impact of sugars on the teeth

Always try to choose water or sugar free drinks between meals as your first choice.

Sugar Free Chewing Gum

How does chewing sugar free gum benefit oral health?

Chewing sugar free gum stimulates saliva production in the mouth. Saliva is the body's natural defence against acid. Sugar from the sugary foods and drink we consume interacts with plaque resulting in an acid attack, repeated acid attacks will cause tooth decay.

What is the advice for chewing sugar free gum?

- Chew sugar free gum after taking methadone
- Chew sugar free gum after sugary drinks and snacks

Chewing sugar free gum is not an alternative to toothbrushing, but is seen as beneficial to oral health.

Why does the sugar free gum include Xylitol?

Evidence from studies has proven that xylitol, a naturally occurring sweetener, is important in the prevention of dental caries (tooth decay).

How does xylitol in chewing gum help protect against tooth decay?

The bacteria in plaque that cause tooth decay and caries are not able to effectively use xylitol for growth. As well as this, the sweetness of xylitol stimulates saliva and relieves the problems of xerostomia. When xylitol is taken after eating or drinking sugary foods the acid attack that would otherwise last over 30 minutes is stopped. This is because the bacteria are unable to ferment xylitol reducing its growth resulting in less damage to teeth.

Visiting the Dentist

Why is it important to visit the dentist regularly?

Visiting the dentist on a regular basis will mean that problems will be spotted earlier and so over time you will need less treatment.

What is meant by regularly?

Regularly can mean different things to different people; some people are recommended to visit the dentist every 3 months for check ups while others may only need an annual check up.

The general recommendation is that most people should go for a check up every 6 months.

What can the dentist do?

The dentist is able to give advice on toothbrushing technique, flossing, the appearance of your teeth, how to keep your gums healthy and how to avoid bad breath.

What advice can I give my clients if they are experiencing toothache and pain?

Clients who are registered with a dentist should be encouraged to contact their dentist to seek emergency dental treatment when in pain or discomfort.

Clients who are unregistered should phone:

- The Forth Valley Dental Helpline on **0844 800 6886** (Monday – Friday 8.30am to 6.00pm) or,
- NHS 24 on **08454 24 24 24** out with these hours, at weekends and on public holidays

Methadone

Why is methadone blamed for causing tooth decay?

Methadone does not have the same analgesic properties as opiates and when clients start taking methadone they often begin to experience toothache and pain, which was previously masked by drug use, and associate this with methadone. In addition to this the syrup like consistency and high sugar content of methadone is also blamed, although as methadone is only a once a day dose the damage to teeth is minimal as tooth decay is related to frequency and amount of sugar consumption.

What information should I give my clients about methadone and oral health?

Methadone will NOT necessarily rot teeth.

Opiates and opiate substitutes are known to cause Xerostomia, a reduction in saliva production that causes dry mouth. Saliva is our natural defence against acid which neutralises acids in the mouth during and acid attack. Dry mouth is the perfect environment for acids and sugars to attack the teeth.

If it is not methadone what is it?

The main cause of tooth decay and tooth loss is a result of poor oral hygiene and poor diet.

Drug taking behaviours result in chaotic lifestyles, poor hygiene routines and poor nutrition. As a result of poor nutrition and poor oral hygiene routines during drug use there is a high level of tooth decay and tooth loss present in this client group that they associate with methadone use and not as a result of lifestyle choices.

What further advice can be given to methadone clients?

- Chew sugar free gum after taking methadone as this will increase the production of saliva to reduce the chance of tooth decay.
- Always encourage clients to drink water and rinse their mouth with water after taking their methadone.
- Advise clients that toothbrushing with fluoride toothpaste **prior** to taking methadone gives greater protection (N.B advise not to brush straight after methadone or straight after sugary acid drinks / foods as this can damage tooth surfaces)
- Advise clients to rinse with fluoride mouthwash after methadone

Brief Intervention Oral Health Advice Summary Sheet

Toothbrushing and Toothpaste

- Brush twice a day for two minutes
- Use a dry toothbrush, pea sized amount of fluoride toothpaste (around 1500ppmF), brush for two minutes, spit out the toothpaste, rinse your brush but not your mouth

Drinks and Snacks

- Reduce the *amount* and *frequency* of sugar in the diet.
- Always try to choose SUGAR FREE drinks and snacks between meals.
- Water and milk are safest for your teeth
- Eat lots of fruit and vegetables
- Swap high sugar options for low sugar alternatives

Chewing Sugar Free Gum

- Chew sugar free gum after taking methadone
- Chew sugar free gum after eating or drinking sugary, acidic foods
- Chewing sugar free gum increases saliva production helping to protect teeth

Visit the dentist regularly

- Recommend visiting the dentist every 6 – 12 months
- For emergency treatment registered patients call their own dentists
- Unregistered patients can call the NHS Forth Valley Dental Helpline on
 - 0844 800 6886 or
 - Call NHS 24 on 08454 24 24 24

Methadone

- Methadone will not necessarily rot the teeth. Remind them that the main cause of tooth decay is poor oral hygiene and poor diet
- Ensure clients are offered water after taking methadone in line with NHS Forth Valley's Dispensing and Supervised Consumption of Methadone – Specification (2009)