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New American Heart Association Guidelines

The American Heart Association recently updated it's guidelines regarding which patients should take a precautionary antibiotic to prevent infective endocarditis (IE) before a trip to the dentist.

The guidelines, published in *Circulation: Journal of the American Heart Association*, are based on a growing body of scientific evidence that shows that, for most people, the risks of taking prophylactic antibiotics for certain procedures outweighs the benefits. These guidelines represent a major change in philosophy.

The new guidelines show that taking preventive antibiotics is not necessary for most people and, in fact, might create more harm than good. Unnecessary use of antibiotics can result in allergic reactions and antibiotic resistance.

Only those at greatest risk of negative outcomes from infective endocarditis – an infection of the heart's inner lining or the heart valves – should receive short term preventive antibiotics before dental and medical procedures.

Patients at the greatest risk of negative outcomes from IE and for whom prophylactic antibiotics are worth the risks are those with:

- artificial heart valves
- history of IE
- certain specific, serious congenital (present from birth) heart conditions including:
 - un-repaired or incompletely repaired cyanotic congenital heart disease, including those with palliative shunts and conduits
 - a completely repaired congenital heart defect with a prosthetic material or device, whether placed by surgery or catheter interventions, during the first 6 months after the procedure.
- A cardiac transplant which develops a problem with the valve

We will only require patients to premedicate for the above conditions. If your physician recommends continued antibiotic prophylaxis for your particular condition, please continue to do so.

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