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Dental Work After a Joint Replacement

Everyone knows that good dental health is important. But, for people with artificial joints, a visit to the dentist can be especially significant. The bacteria that cause infections in the teeth or gums can easily travel through the bloodstream and settle in the artificial joint. That can cause even more problems than a toothache.

Physicians from the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons developed the following recommendations for people with joint replacements who are planning to have some dental work done. These recommendations are designed to help doctors make decisions about preventive antibiotics for people with artificial joints who need dental work. It is not a standard of care or a substitute for the practitioner's clinical judgment, because it is impossible to make recommendations that would cover every situation. Practitioners must exercise their own clinical judgment in determining whether or not preventive antibiotics are appropriate.

After joint replacement, when do you need preventive antibiotics before dental procedures?

You won't need to get preventive antibiotics for most dental procedures. But because you have an artificial joint, your risk of contracting a blood-borne infection is higher than normal. So, preventive treatment is advised if the dental procedure involves high levels of bacteria.

You should get preventive antibiotics before dental procedures if:

- You have an inflammatory type of arthritis such as rheumatoid arthritis or systemic lupus
- Your immune system has been weakened by disease, drugs, or radiation.
- You have insulin-dependent (Type I) diabetes.
- You've had previous infections in your artificial joint.
- You are undernourished or malnourished.
- You have hemophilia.

After joint replacement, what dental procedures require preventive antibiotics?

You should get preventive antibiotics for the following dental procedures:

- Dental extractions
- Periodontal (gum disease) procedures
- Dental implant placement and reimplantation of teeth that were knocked out
- Endodontic (root canal) instrumentation or surgery
- Initial placement of orthodontic bands (not brackets)
- Injection of a local anesthetic into the gums near the jaw
- Regular cleaning of teeth or implants where bleeding is anticipated

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