



More broccoli than dentistry?

The British Dental Association has questioned Health Secretary Matt Hancock's priorities following the launch of his new 'prevention focused' vision for the NHS. The policy paper *Prevention is better than cure* was the precursor to a green paper due to be published this year.¹

But the British Dental Association say that document makes one passing reference to improving oral health of children. BDA Chair Mick Armstrong says the vision does not touch on delivery of a prevention-focused NHS dental contract, which has been a Conservative Manifesto commitment since 2010.

'The Health Secretary says he wants to champion prevention. Sadly he's had more to say about broccoli than wholly preventable oral diseases that are costing our NHS millions. When tooth decay remains the number one reason for child hospital admissions, treating dentistry as an afterthought looks more than careless.'

'England's huge oral health inequalities are fuelled by poverty and the lack of a coherent strategy. The starting point for any solution won't be 'Big Data' or Apps, it requires political will from Westminster and an end to year on year cuts.'

1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevention-is-better-than-cure-our-vision-to-help-you-live-well-for-longer>

EXPERTS ISSUE GUIDANCE ON BEST CARE FOR DENTURES

A global task force of academic experts has released new guidelines to address the needs of an ageing population worldwide in tackling inconsistent and contradictory advice on the best care of dentures.

The Global Task Force for Care of Full Dentures, brought together by UK-based charity the Oral Health Foundation, said current recommendations on denture care were often 'confusing' and 'unreliable', while many made claims that were without valid evidence.

It is anticipated that the need for people to have dentures will increase dramatically over the next 30 years as the older population increases with a predicted two billion people aged over 60 by 2050.

The group of experts, including representatives from the Oral Health Foundation and King's College London, has launched a series of guidelines on how to look after dentures.¹

The project, which received an educational grant from GSK, featured a panel of independent and internationally-recognised experts from the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, Japan and the UK.

Risks associated with poor denture care include inflammation of the mouth, staining, changes in taste and bad breath. It has also been linked to wider health problems such as pneumonia, particularly in frail older people.

The new advice has been summarised in four key steps:

- brush dentures daily using a toothbrush or denture brush along with a non-abrasive cleaner (not toothpaste as some have been previously instructed)
- soak dentures daily using a denture cleanser to remove more of the bad bacteria and disinfect the dentures
- take out dentures at night unless there are reasons for leaving dentures in – taking them out overnight will help to relieve any soreness and prevent infection
- visit a dentist regularly to ensure dentures are being kept in good condition and the mouth is still healthy.



Dr Nigel Carter, Chief Executive of the Foundation, said: 'We have found that people with dentures do not know how they should be cleaning them. Our report shows that denture wearers use everything from soap and water to toothpastes, bleaches and commercial products. But with the variety of recommendations available online and from other sources, it is no surprise that people are confused.'

'We hope these new recommendations can reassure people about the best way to look after their dentures. We will now be working with the NHS, local authorities, dental practices and GPs to help adoption of these guidelines across the UK.'

Mili Doshi, President of the British Society of Gerodontology, welcomes the guidance but highlights that a cautious approach needs to be taken around residents of care homes and hospitals and those with dementia living in their own homes. The use of denture cleansing solutions is appropriate for people living independently but for those with cognitive or visual impairments, there is a risk that the solution is confused with water or the cleansing tablets confused with their regular medication.

The view of BSG, she says, is that dentures should be cleaned on a daily basis with a toothbrush and soap to remove debris and then rinsed with water.

1. Oral Health Foundation. White Paper on Optimal Care and Maintenance of Full Dentures for Oral and General Health. <https://www.dentalhealth.org/denturecareguidelines>. (accessed on 17 September 2018)