

Title	PATIENTS PRESENTING WITH DENTAL PROBLEMS OUT OF HOURS			Number	CL06
Effective From:	20.09.08	Duration:	Ongoing	Review:	01.10.24
Author:	Dr Fay Wilson			Version:	1.5
Other Ref:	www.gpnotebook.co.uk				
Contacts:	Dr Fay Wilson				

Version Control

(Only last 3 versions, earlier versions can be found in the appropriate Archive directory for the document)

DATE	CHANGE	CHANGED BY
14.03.16	Reviewed, removed Walsall references, other changes	SM
22.05.19	Reviewed, no change	SMcD
13.10.21	Reviewed, minor change	SMcD/FW

Introduction

BADGER is not commissioned to provide dental care or assessment nor is there an expectation that staff are competent or equipped to do so. NHS dentists no longer have contractual responsibility for their patients out of hours. The NHS has commissioned out-of-hours dental services separately. Clinicians and staff should familiarise themselves with the appropriate way of dealing with patients who may have a dental problem out of hours.

Procedure for Receptionists

Patients with symptoms around the jaw and face:

Take the call as usual and advise the caller that this is a medical service and the clinician will ring back to assess whether a dentist is needed. If so, the clinician will advise them how to contact the dental service.

Patients with protracted dental bleeding, trauma or swelling to the face i.e. rapidly spreading infection should be told to go to the A&E.

If the caller prefers to contact the dental service at this point they can do so by ringing NHS 111 (unless they are calling about a prisoner. If the patient decides to do this, close the call as “receptionist advice” and note that the caller is going to contact NHS 111 for dental advice.

Prison calls

These should be taken using the normal prison procedure and passed to the assessment pool for clinicians to assess using the following section.

If you have any doubts please request assistance from the duty Team Leader.

Procedure for Clinicians

Prison Calls

Prisoners do not generally have access to OOH dental services. Serious dental trauma should be referred to the nearest maxillo-facial hospital service. Patients should not be referred to A&E. 999 advice should be given only where there is an immediate risk to life or such conditions as coma or life-threatening bleeding.

Dental abscesses should be treated with non-opiate analgesia. Antibiotics should be considered only in the following circumstances:

- If the patient is systematically unwell/has signs of severe infection. (e.g. fever, lymphadenopathy, cellulitis, diffuse swelling)
- For high-risk individuals, to reduce the risk of complications. (e.g. immunocompromised, diabetic, valvular heart disease)

If antibiotics are prescribed, then this should only be sufficient to last until the next in-hours period when the patient should be reviewed by another clinician who should arrange referral to the prison's dental service.

Dental Abscess in prisoners: until end of OOH period

- **Non-opiate analgesia: Paracetamol + Ibuprofen**
- **Metronidazole 400mg 8 hourly orally**
+
Amoxicillin 500mg 8 hourly OR Clarithromycin 500mg 12 hourly orally

Other patients

The telephone clinician should assess the symptoms. If there is doubt whether the patient's problem is a medical or dental condition, the clinician must make an adequate assessment to put him / herself in a position to make a reasonable diagnosis. In some cases examination may be required.

Definite dental problem established by phone:

The patient should be advised that BADGER does not provide dental services. NHS 111 holds details of the relevant commissioned Dental Service for each locality, and the patient should be advised to call 111 and tell the operator they need to contact the out of hours dental service. **Do not book these patients to be seen at a PCC.** If the patient disagrees, seek advice from the duty medical director.

Patients with protracted dental bleeding, trauma or swelling to the face i.e. rapidly spreading infection should go to the A&E.

Possible but not certain dental problem

Advise patient they have a choice whether to contact the dental out-of-hours service for advice or attend a PCC to see a clinician for examination. If there is a dental problem they will be advised to contact the dental service. If the problem is not dental the clinician may be able to offer treatment.

Dental problem in a patient seen at PCC

Unless you are a qualified dentist you should not attempt to treat dental problems. **This includes dental abscesses.** Explain to the patient that you do not have the equipment for a proper dental examination and are not trained to provide dental treatment. Complications can result from incorrect treatment. Patients should be offered sufficient analgesia to see them through the out-of-hours period and given information about contacting the out-of-hours dental service.

Antibiotics should not be prescribed for dental abscesses in the community since they are insufficient to treat the condition but patients may improve symptomatically and fail to follow advice to consult a dentist. They thus risk osteomyelitis or other complications.

Solihull Care Trust

Solihull Care Trust have an out of hours contract for Dental care, which patients can access by calling 111 as outlined above.

Further information www.gpnotebook.co.uk

Further advice

For further advice please contact the medical director, Dr Fay Wilson on 07788 418513 or via faywilson@clara.net