

ORTHOPEDIC IMPLANT PREMEDICATION CHECKLIST

Should I Take Antibiotics Before My Dental Procedure?

You have an orthopedic implant (joint replacement, metal plates or rods, etc.) from a previous orthopedic surgery. A potential complication of these orthopedic implants is bacterial infection, which occurs in approximately 1 to 3 percent of patients. These infections can require more surgery, as well as antibiotic usage for an extended period of time. Most infections occur around the time of the procedure (within one year), but some have occurred much later. In theory, late orthopedic infections are caused by the spread of bacteria from the bloodstream to the implant. Unfortunately, there is no clear scientific evidence to support this theory. We know that many patients with orthopedic implants frequently have bacteria in their blood that does not spread to their implants.

Dental procedures have long been considered a potential cause of implant infections, even after the initial orthopedic postoperative period. This is because dental procedures can introduce bacteria from the mouth into the bloodstream. However, this fact should be considered in the context that eating and performing oral hygiene procedures such as brushing and flossing at home also may introduce oral bacteria into the blood. Traditionally, antibiotics have been provided prior to certain dental procedures in patients with orthopedic implants to minimize the bacteria that get into the blood. The best evidence, however, does not show that antibiotics provided before oral care help prevent infections of orthopedic implants. The routine use of antibiotics in this manner has potential side effects such as increased bacterial resistance, allergic reactions, diarrhea, and in extreme cases, death.

Patients who have compromised immune systems might be at greater risk for orthopedic implant-related infections, particularly during the first six months following placement. Examples of contributing problems that could cause immunosuppression include diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, cancer, chemotherapy, and chronic steroid use. You should discuss any potential for immunosuppression with your orthopedic surgeon. Patients who are indeed immunocompromised might wish to consider taking antibiotics before some selected dental procedures because of their greater risk for infection. Decisions with regard to antibiotic premedication should be made by the patient, the dentist, and the physician in a context of open communication and informed consent.

Patient Checklist and Decision/Signature

Please circle the appropriate answers.

1. I have adequate understanding of implant infections associated with dental procedures. YES NO
2. My dentist has discussed my specific risk factors with me. YES NO
3. I need further education and discussion on this issue. YES NO
4. I am immunocompromised because I have: _____.
5. Based on this educational material and discussion, I will:
____ Not take antibiotics before selected dental procedures, including cleanings.
____ Take antibiotics before selected dental procedures, including cleanings.

Patient Name

Signature

Date

Witness Signature

Date