



**College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario  
L'Ordre des hygiénistes dentaires de l'Ontario**

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**Guideline for Best Practice in Initiating Dental Hygiene Care**

This guideline should be read in conjunction with the *CDHO Standards of Practice, Code of Ethics, Records Regulation & Standard for Self-Initiation*. All dental hygienists, regardless of practice setting or employment arrangement, are expected to use their knowledge, skill and judgment when discussing situations in which consultation with another health care professional is indicated. The final decision to proceed with dental hygiene treatment or not to proceed with the dental hygiene treatment is the responsibility of the registrant. In documenting the reasons for proceeding, postponing treatment or referring to another health care provider, the dental hygienist should note the resources consulted and/or rationale used.

Best practice indicates that the **Dental Hygiene Process of Care** is the framework within which all dental hygiene therapy should be conducted.

**Assessment**

A thorough, detailed medical and dental history must be taken and discussed with the client or the client's substitute decision maker. Registrants may choose to develop their own charting system or to evaluate an existing system against the Medical/Dental History Guide available on the CDHO web site. If warranted, and with the client's consent, further discussion with the appropriate health care professional to receive a medical clearance should occur. Ideally, the clearance will be provided in writing either by fax or e-mail and included in the client's chart. If the information is obtained over the telephone the registrant should clearly document the substance, time and date of the conversation. Areas of particular concern may be:

- i) any cardiac condition for which antibiotic prophylaxis is recommended in the guidelines set by the American Heart Association (AHA)\*;

\*A client who has previously experienced an episode of infective endocarditis or whose physician or Nurse Practitioner [RN(EC)] has noted that prophylactic antibiotics are required, must have taken the requisite prophylactic medication in accordance with the AHA guidelines before commencement of the dental hygiene appointment.

- ii) any other condition for which antibiotic prophylaxis is recommended or required;

Registrants should consult the guideline *Recommended Antibiotic Prophylaxis for Dental Procedures* found on the CDHO web site for additional conditions requiring prophylactic antibiotics and if there are any concerns consult with the appropriate health care professional prior to the delivery of invasive dental hygiene procedures as listed in Table 4 of the guideline.

- iii) any unstable medical or oral health condition, where the condition may affect the appropriateness or safety of scaling teeth and root planing including curetting surrounding tissue;

Should a client present with an unstable condition, the registrant should consult with the client's appropriate health care provider. If, in the registrant's professional judgment, proceeding with treatment is not in the client's best interest, then the treatment must be postponed and the appropriate referral made.

- iv) active chemotherapy or radiation therapy;

If a client is in the process of receiving chemotherapy and/or radiation therapy, consultation with the client's health care provider is essential prior to any dental hygiene intervention. In the case of radiation therapy, no additional routine oral radiographs should be taken even if prescribed by a dentist or physician.

- v) significant immunosuppression caused by disease, medications or treatment modalities;

When a client is identified as being significantly immunosuppressed the dental hygienist must decide the risk versus the benefit of proceeding with care based on the client's current immune status. The dental hygienist should work collaboratively with the client's health care provider/team to determine the optimal sequencing of dental hygiene therapies and interventions to ensure that the client's oral health care needs are met safely and appropriately.

- vi) any blood disorders;

"Blood disorders" is a very broad term and the dental hygienist should investigate the condition sufficiently to enable the registrant to make a decision based on risk as to whether to proceed or not. This investigation would involve confirming knowledge and evidence related to the condition and consulting with the appropriate health care provider.

- vii) active tuberculosis;

If a client presents with active tuberculosis, the dental hygienist should postpone treatment until the client's physician has indicated that the disease is no longer in the active state.

- viii) drug or alcohol dependency of a type or extent that it may affect the appropriateness or safety of scaling teeth and root planing including curetting surrounding tissue;

A client who appears to be under the influence of a substance that could impair the client's judgment or states that s/he has ingested a significant amount of alcohol prior to the dental hygiene appointment, should be rescheduled for a time when the client is aware and can participate safely in the dental hygiene care plan.

- ix) high-risk of infective endocarditis;

A client who has previously experienced an episode of infective endocarditis or whose physician has noted that prophylactic antibiotics are required due to valve replacement surgery, must have taken the requisite prophylactic medication according to the AHA guidelines before commencement of the dental hygiene appointment. (See item i)

- x) a medical or oral health condition with which the registrant is unfamiliar or which could affect the appropriateness, efficacy or safety of the procedure;

If in the course of taking the medical/dental history the dental hygienist becomes aware of a condition with which the registrant is unfamiliar, the registrant shall further investigate the condition using appropriate resources and evidence. This may include consulting with additional health care practitioners.

- xi) a drug or a combination of drugs with which the registrant is unfamiliar or which could affect the appropriateness, efficacy or safety of the procedure.

If the client is taking a drug or combination of drugs with which the registrant is unfamiliar, the registrant should further interview the client as to the nature of the medication and effects. The registrant should research the drug(s) in the current *CPS, Mosby's Dental Drug Consult* or other suitable reference and note any contraindications to proceeding with treatment. If the registrant is in doubt, s/he should consult with the appropriate health care provider.

Since the above is not an exhaustive list of concerns, the registrant should research and consult on any area with which s/he is not familiar.

### **Planning**

The registrant is responsible for developing an individual treatment plan for each client prior to initiating dental hygiene therapies. The dental hygiene treatment plan for each client must include:

1. a complete clinical assessment
2. a dental hygiene diagnosis
3. client centered goals/objectives
4. planned sequence of activities
5. client participation

The dental hygiene treatment plan must be documented in accordance with the *CDHO Records Regulation* and must be updated on a regular basis.

The client's informed consent for treatment must be obtained and documented.

### **Implementation**

The registrant is responsible for ensuring that dental hygiene treatment is individualized in accordance with the treatment plan presented to, and agreed to by, the client. In addition, all treatment activities, including the time spent on the procedure must be documented in accordance with the *CDHO Records Regulation*. Financial records must correlate with the actual time and procedure documented on the client's chart.

The registrant should ensure that the client receives appropriate post-appointment instructions and recommendations for pain management. Individualized instructions in oral self-care should be based on the assessment and treatment plan.

## **Evaluation**

Clinical evaluation of the client's oral health progress should be done at intervals appropriate to the client and must not be dependent on third-party payment schedules or those of other health care providers. A clinical re-assessment is performed, the dental hygiene treatment plan is reviewed and discussed with the client and modified as required.

## **Best practices in All Clinical Settings**

The office has a written policy for the collection and maintenance of client information in accordance with the *CDHO Records Regulation* and *PHIPA*.

Current scientifically accepted infection control procedures are in place.

Emergency protocol, emergency supplies, equipment and oxygen are in place.

The registrant has proof of current CPR certification.

Exposing and processing of radiographs and radiation hygiene are consistent with the *Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (HARP)*.

Equipment is current and in good repair.

Equipment, instruments and supplies are sufficient to support the selection and implementation of appropriate dental hygiene services.

The date and particulars of each professional contact with the client is documented in accordance with the *CDHO Record Keeping Regulation*

The registrant consults and/or refers to other health professionals as required  
[Reference: *CDHO Standards of Practice*]

***For additional information or to discuss a particular situation, the registrant is encouraged to contact the Practice Advisor at ext 239 or [ltaylor@cdho.org](mailto:ltaylor@cdho.org)***

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