

Patient information factsheet

Adult congenital heart service: infective endocarditis

We have written this factsheet to give you more information about infective endocarditis. It explains what endocarditis is, the symptoms to be aware of and how to reduce your risk of endocarditis. We hope it will help to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact us.

What is endocarditis?

Endocarditis is a rare but serious and potentially life-threatening condition. It is usually caused by bacteria that enters the bloodstream and infects the lining of the heart or, more commonly, the heart valves.

The following heart conditions can put you more at risk of developing endocarditis:

- some congenital (present from birth) heart conditions
- heart transplant
- previous endocarditis
- heart valve replacement
- material in your heart (such as a tissue graft)

If you have any concerns, please discuss them with your cardiologist (specialist heart doctor).

Symptoms

Symptoms of endocarditis may include the following:

- fever, chills or a temperature
- sweating (particularly night sweats)
- muscular aches and pains, or weakness
- headache
- unexplained tiredness
- unexplained weight loss

Causes and prevention

It is not possible to prevent all bacteria from getting into your bloodstream, but there are some things you can do to reduce your risk of getting endocarditis:

- Good oral hygiene is extremely important, as bacteria on your teeth can enter your bloodstream through your gums and settle in your heart. You should:
 - visit the dentist regularly
 - brush your teeth well (at least twice a day)
- Avoid body piercing and tattoos.
- Do not inject recreational drugs.

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It is very important that you inform your GP, cardiologist, surgeon or dentist if you have any symptoms that concern you. Tell them that you may be at risk of endocarditis before any procedure or operation, as you may require antibiotics to protect you.

What to do if you think you have endocarditis

See your GP as soon as possible. Explain that you are at risk of endocarditis and describe your symptoms. A blood test can be performed to help confirm the diagnosis. If endocarditis is suspected, you will need to be referred to the hospital cardiology team for immediate treatment.

It is important that the blood tests are performed before antibiotics are started.

Treatment

Treatment may include:

- hospital admission
- intravenous (into a vein) antibiotics for approximately six weeks
- surgery (if your heart is damaged by the infection)

Contact us

If you have any concerns or questions, please contact us.

Adult congenital heart clinical nurse specialists

Telephone: **023 8120 4739**

Hospital switchboard

Telephone: **023 8077 7222** then ask for **bleep 1481**

Email: **ACHDliaisonteam@uhs.nhs.uk**

Useful links

www.nhs.uk/conditions/congenital-heart-disease

www.nhs.uk/conditions/endocarditis

For a translation of this document, or a version in another format such as easy read, large print, Braille or audio, please telephone **023 8120 4688**.

For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalneeds**