

# Dental problems

CARING FOR YOUR TEETH IS IMPORTANT WHETHER YOU HAVE HAD TREATMENT FOR A CANCER OR NOT. SOME YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAVE HAD CERTAIN TYPES OF TREATMENT ARE MORE LIKELY TO HAVE PROBLEMS WITH THEIR TEETH:

- 1/ Chemotherapy can affect teeth, particularly if you were 5 years of age or younger at the time of treatment. The enamel, the outer covering, can be of poorer quality than normal leading to discolouration and/or cavities. Some adult teeth may be missing or have abnormal roots.
- 2/ Radiotherapy to the head or neck area can also cause damage to growing teeth, and roots of teeth, and occasionally a tooth doesn't grow through the gum properly. It can also cause dryness in the mouth and/or the lack of saliva that makes it easier for decay to start.
- 3/ If you have a metal bone replacement or bone graft (prosthesis), any "bugs" that enter the blood stream through tooth decay may cause a serious infection around the prosthesis.
- 4/ If you have had your spleen removed (splenectomy) tooth decay can lead to serious infection, so regular checks are important.

## DO I NEED TO TAKE SPECIAL PRECAUTIONS WHEN HAVING DENTAL WORK DONE?

If you have any of the following it is important that you tell your dentist as you may need antibiotics before any dental treatment, including cleaning:

- 1/ Shunt (tube that drains the fluid from the brain).
- 2/ Limb salvage (metal bone replacement or bone graft).
- 3/ Leaky heart valve (sometimes happens after radiation to the chest).

The reason for antibiotics is that when any work is done on the teeth, bacteria that normally live in the mouth is released into the blood stream. These bacteria can attach themselves to the graft, abnormal valve or shunt and cause an infection to start.

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THE DENTIST KNOWS WHAT TREATMENT YOU HAD IN THE PAST, AS YOU MAY NEED ANTIBIOTICS BEFORE STARTING ANY DENTAL TREATMENT



HAVE A DENTAL CHECK UP AT LEAST ONCE A YEAR...

FOR THESE REASONS IT IS IMPORTANT TO SEE YOUR DENTIST REGULARLY, AT LEAST ONCE A YEAR IS RECOMMENDED. DENTISTS CAN ADVISE ON ALL ASPECTS OF DENTAL CARE AND ARRANGE FOR ANY SPECIALIST TREATMENT WITH AN ORTHODONTIST IF NEEDED.

ORTHODONTISTS WORK IS NOT FUNDED IN NEW ZEALAND, BUT DENTAL CARE IS FREE UP UNTIL THE AGE OF 18YRS AND HOSPITAL-BASED DENTAL CLINICS IN SOME REGIONS DO PROVIDE SOME FREE DENTAL CARE FOR ADULTS.