

Disclosure of medication can save a patient's life

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Do you regularly take aspirin or antiplatelet medications? Do you know whether or not these drugs should be stopped before dental procedures or surgeries? According to a study published in the May/June issue of *General Dentistry*, the clinical, peer-reviewed journal of the Academy of General Dentistry (AGD), stopping antiplatelet medications prior to a surgical procedure places a patient at greater risk of permanent disability or death.

The probability of a patient bleeding depends on the over-the-counter and/or prescribed drug or combinations of drugs.

"A thorough drug history should be reviewed prior to any procedures," notes Mary Aubertin, DMD, lead author of the study. Dr. Aubertin recommends that the dentist and patient start with a simple discussion. "The dentist and the patient should discuss the risks and benefits of treatment with or without the drugs versus no treatment and include the patient's physician's opinion in the decision making process. This will allow everyone involved to understand and prevent medical risks."

Fortunately, due to the prevalence of this type of medication, dentists are prepared to treat these situations. According to AGD spokesperson Carolyn Taggart-Burns, DDS, "excessive bleeding is a major concern with many dental procedures due to the extensive prescribing of blood thinners in America. Heart disease is so prevalent that many patients are on these drugs, which can complicate even the simplest procedure." Dr. Taggart-Burns reminds patients that it is very important "to

communicate medical history with your dentist so that they can provide the best care possible."

What happens after a procedure is also important to the dentist. Patients who experience excessive bleeding or bruising after the surgery, in spite of applying pressure to the site with wet gauze or a wet tea bag for 20-30 minutes, should contact the dentist for evaluation and treatment.

"Informing the dentist of medical issues is the first step. Working with the patient's physician and the patient to develop a plan is also important. Last, staying healthy is the best way to have a successful procedure," says Dr. Taggart-Burns.

What you should do before a dental procedure:

- Schedule a consultation with the dentist
- Disclose all prescribed and over-the-counter medicines to your dentist
- Disclose your medical history and concerns
- Discuss the risks and benefits of treatment with or without the drugs
- Ask the dentist if they have an office emergency plan

Source: Academy of General Dentistry

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