

DENTAL TEAMS CAN BE 'VITAL LINK' IN CARING FOR PATIENTS WITH EATING DISORDERS

Dental teams are in the ideal position to identify and act on early signs of eating disorders according to the Oral Health Foundation.

Around 1.25 million people in the UK are affected by an eating disorder and many can be recognised by a range of common problems in the mouth.

Around nine-in-ten (90%) of patients with bulimia and one-in-five (20%) with anorexia suffer from enamel erosion. Tooth decay, sensitive teeth, dry mouth and enlarged salivary glands are also frequent.

The Oral Health Foundation believes that thousands of undiagnosed eating disorders can be picked up during regular dental check-ups by dentists, dental hygienists, dental therapists and dental nurses.

Chief Executive of the Oral Health Foundation, Dr Nigel Carter, said: 'During the routine dental examination, dental teams carry out checks on the hard and soft tissues of the mouth and look for signs of tooth erosion. They will also look for possible injuries to the mouth which could have been induced by inserting foreign objects that cause a person to vomit.'

'The UK needs a far better strategy for diagnosing eating disorders early. The sooner an eating disorder is suspected or recognised, then the more effective treatment will be.'

This treatment extends far beyond any damage caused to the mouth. It is also necessary to instigate wider medical referrals to those who specialise in treating eating disorders.'

In the UK, around 275,000 people suffer from binge eating disorders, 235,000 have bulimia and 100,000 are diagnosed with anorexia.

Those who purge through vomiting often suffer from enamel erosion and those with binge eating disorders may have an increased risk of tooth decay and tooth loss through excessive sugar consumption.

The lack of vitamins and nutrient deficiencies associated with eating disorders can also cause the body to shut down and not function properly. This will also be reflected by signs in the mouth.

Dr Carter added: 'As well as erosion through stomach acid, dental teams will also be able to detect conditions such as tooth decay, from excessive sugar consumption and signs of nutrient deficiencies.'

'If they suspect that a person might be suffering from an eating disorder, they will be able to talk calmly through the clinical signs they are seeing in the mouth. They might also speak about prescribing a high fluoride toothpaste or varnish to protect your teeth from decay.'



'The more open and honest patients can be with their dental team, the better they will be able to help. Your dental team can be trusted to help you and will not judge you over any symptoms you are having.'

Beat is a UK eating disorder charity who help and support people affected by eating disorders. Beat are currently working on a webinar series to educate different health sectors about health, which includes dentists, dietitians, and pharmacists. The aim of this training will be to help professionals identify the signs of an eating disorder and understand how to support their patients. However, whilst it's important to increase awareness of eating disorders, it is never the role of dental professionals to diagnose or treat the eating disorder, and patients must always be signposted to specialist support.

Beat's helpline is open 365 days a year on 0808 801 0677 or can be accessed at www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk. You can find more help at <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/mental-health-services/> for information and support.

©simplehappyart/Stock/Getty Images Plus

ORGANISATIONS SUPPORT BADN MENOPAUSE POLICY

The British Dental Industry Association (BDIA) has announced its support for the BADN Menopause Policy launched in March this year.

The Policy outlines the challenges faced by menopausal women in the workplace and suggests ways in which employers can support menopausal employees. Dental practices, laboratories, clinics, organisations and dental industry companies are asked to adopt the Policy and implement it in their workplace.

Gail Vernon, Vice-President of the BDIA, said 'This is a great resource making it easier to talk about menopause in the workplace. It's also a great example of shared learnings across the industry and the BDIA are delighted to lend support to this important initiative.'

BADN's Menopause Policy is also supported by the British Society of Hygiene

and Therapy (BSDHT), the College of General Dentistry (CGDent), the Dental Laboratories Association (DLA), the Dental Technologists' Association (DTA), the Orthodontic National Group (ONG), the British Veterinary Nurses' Association (BVNA) and the British Association of Dental Therapists (BADT).

CGDent, membership of which is open to all dental and oral health professionals, is the first organisation representing dentists to endorse the BADN's Menopause Policy. The College is the independent professional body into which the Faculty of General Dental Practice transferred last year.

Abhi Pal, President of CGDent, said: 'The BADN's Menopause Policy is an important, practical and succinct tool which helps dental professionals to better understand the menopause, to appreciate

relevant employment law, and to implement a menopause policy in their practice.'

'On behalf of the College, I congratulate BADN on its publication, and am pleased to endorse it.'

BADT President Debbie Hemington said: 'BADT are proud to support this superb initiative by the BADN. As a predominantly female profession still, this will impact so many of our members and their families and having some written guidance to share with workplaces will be invaluable to anyone who needs it. BADN are to be commended on highlighting the impact of this topical issue and in raising awareness among the whole dental team. Dental practices could now lead the way by adopting the policy and showing that progress within the field is not confined to clinical techniques.'