

BSPD advises members to discuss immunisation with patients

The British Society of Paediatric Dentistry (BSPD) has issued advice to members to open up conversations about vaccinations as reports of measles cases increase across the UK.

The Society's advice is to highlight the evidence-based risk, explain this to families in the context of NHS guidelines and to signpost parents and carers of unvaccinated children to their GP or health visitor. BSPD believes that as part of 'Making Every Contact Count' (MECC)¹ and our commitment to provide holistic care for our patients, this is the ideal opportunity for dentists to play their role.

Dentists will be asking about patients' vaccination status anyway – as part of the routine medical history. BSPD believes that this is the moment to ask specifically about MMR immunisation and recommends Dental Check by 1 (DCby1), as an ideal time to remind parents and carers to ensure their children's immunisation records are up to date (DCby1 is BSPD's campaign to get children into a dentist's chair before their first birthday).

Measles is an infection that spreads very easily and can cause serious problems in some people. Having the MMR vaccine is the best way to prevent it.



Professor Paula Waterhouse, BSPD President said: 'BSPD supports MECC and it makes sense for our members to take this opportunity to spread the message about the importance of vaccination. We recommend paediatric dentists and GPs seeing children – and their parents or carers – take this moment to discuss the MMR vaccine, which is free for all on the NHS. We recommend suggesting a parent or carer checks their child's Red Book or contacts

their GP practice or health visitor to arrange an appointment. We know that vaccines are our best defence against measles, which spreads very easily, but is preventable.'

References

1. Public Health England. Making Every Contact Count (MECC): Consensus statement. April 2016. Available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/making-every-contact-count.pdf> (accessed November 2023).

Mouth cancer: access problems will cost lives

During Mouth Cancer Action Month 2023, which takes place in November, the British Dental Association (BDA) has stressed that the Government must act to meaningfully restore access to NHS dentistry, as oral cancer rates and deaths continue to rise.

Dentists are on the frontline in the battle with the condition, with the tell-tale signs often picked up at a routine check-up. New data show there were 9,860 cases of mouth cancer in the UK in 2020/21 – up 12% on the previous comparable year. The disease killed more than 3,000 people in 2021 – up 46%, from 2,075 a decade ago.

Early detection results in a roughly 90% survival rate, compared to a 50% survival rate for delayed diagnosis. In this context, the BDA stress ongoing access problems will make a difference between life and death for some patients.

While 'high-risk' patients can be targeted – older smokers, heavy drinkers – there is a significant growth in cases from human papillomavirus (HPV), who are generally younger, do not usually smoke, and drink little or no alcohol.

Oral cancer now claims more lives than road collisions in each of the UK nations.

NHS dentistry in England is still waiting on a promised recovery plan from government,

expected before summer. The government is also late in providing a response to the damning inquiry into the service from the Health and Social Care Committee.

British Dental Association Chair Eddie Crouch said: 'Every dental check-up doubles as an oral cancer screening. When late detection can radically reduce your chances of survival, the access crisis millions face will inevitably cost lives.

'This condition causes more deaths than car accidents. With rates surging, we need more than radio silence from Westminster.'

To find out more about Mouth Cancer Action Month visit <https://www.dentalhealth.org/mouthcanceractionmonth2023>.