Dental services for people experiencing homelessness

Oral health is important for your well-being. A healthy mouth can help in speaking, eating, and socializing. It can also prevent other health issues from developing. Common oral health problems are:

- Toothache
- Bleeding Gums
- Loose teeth
- Swelling or infection
- Denture problems
- Non-healing ulcers inside the mouth on the tongue or lip

Mouth Cancer

Mouth or oral cancers develop in the tongue, tonsils, lips, and other areas of the mouth. You have an increased risk of developing mouth cancer if you:

- Smoke or use tobacco
- Drink a lot of alcohol

The combination of both smoking and alcohol increases the risk.

Please get medical or dental advice if you notice:

- Ulcers that do not go away within 2-3 weeks
- White or red patches in your mouth
- Unusual lumps or swellings in your mouth or throat

Smoking (tobacco use) and Alcohol

Smoking can harm the whole mouth causing:

- Bad breath
- Stained teeth
- Gum disease
- Dry mouth
- Changed sense of taste

Alcoholic drinks contain a lot of sugar and are very acidic. This causes the outer layer of the teeth (enamel) to wear off.

Substance use

Substance use can impact teeth and gums by:

- Craving for sugary foods
- Causing dry mouth which leads to increased risk of oral diseases
- Jaw clenching and tooth grinding can lead to cracked teeth, jaw pain, and headaches
- Substance use may result in neglecting regular brushing

If you have been prescribed **Methadone** and are not sure if it is sugar-free, ask your health professional for the sugar-free option.

Oral health care tips

Brush teeth twice a day
Use fluoride toothpaste once during the day and last thing at night. Brush for two minutes with small, circular motions, focusing on all surfaces and the gum line.

Spit, don't rinse

After brushing, spit out the toothpaste **but do not rinse with water**. This keeps the fluoride on the tooth surface for protection against decay.

Cut down on Sugars

Sugar is a primary cause of tooth decay. Limit sugary foods and drinks, including alcohol.

Visit the dentist regularly

Regular visits will help to maintain good oral health and identify any issues early on (even if you have few/no teeth).
It also helps your Dentist to keep a check on serious conditions like mouth cancer.

The Whittington Health NHS Community Dental services in Camden & Islington will be able to see you at their clinics. Your support /key worker may be able to refer you to the dental services.

Referral forms can be found on our website: https://www.whittington.nhs.uk/default.asp?c=10989

Telephone: 020 3316 8353

Our clinics

- Finsbury Health Centre
  17 Pine Street, EC1R 0LP (Near Farringdon Station)

- Crowndale Health Centre
  59 Crowndale Road, NW1 1TN (Near Mornington Crescent Station)

NHS Dental Charges

NHS Dental services are free if you receive any benefits. Please bring exemption certificates with you on your appointments e.g. HC2 certificate, Universal Credit etc.

Urgent Dental Care

If you are a patient of Whittington Health Dental Services and you have an urgent problem, contact us on 020 3316 8353.

If you don't have a dentist, **call NHS 111 or visit NHS 111 online** for further guidance on where you can be seen.

Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)
If you have a compliment, complaint or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or whh-tr.PALS@nhs.net

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet please email whh-tr.patient-information@nhs.net. We will try our best to meet your needs.

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