

Medical history important for dental care

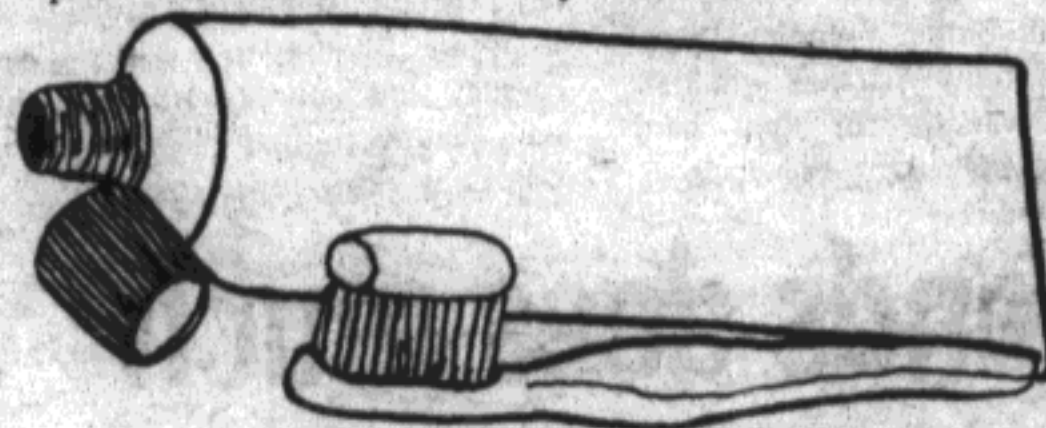
By Carol Saburomaru, DDS
NSB H&SSA Dental Clinic

Many people may wonder why it is so important to fill out a medical history section in our dental records, or why we require a complete medical history. What they may not know is that past medical problems may affect or alter our dental treatment, for example, heart diseases.

A person who is born with a congenital heart defect, has a

heart prostheses, has a history of rheumatic fever, has functional heart murmurs, or has had any type of surgery involving the heart, may be susceptible to a bacteremic — bac-

teremia, such as those with prosthetic heart valves, appear to be at a higher risk of developing endocarditis than are patients with other cardiac problems.



cautions should be taken for those patients whose medical history shows a need.

To combat the chances of developing endocarditis, prophylactic administration of antibiotics is necessary. The regimen of antibiotics recommended by the American Heart Association includes primarily penicillin, but if an allergy to penicillin exists, erythromycin is administered.

Either antibiotic is administered prior to your dental appointment to insure that you

are preventively reducing the chance of endocarditis developing.

So you can now see how important it is to inform your dentist through the medical history form of any medical problems you may have, like heart disease, so that you may protect yourself.

Take the time to complete your medical history on the dental chart and if you have any questions, or may not be sure if you may have a problem ask your dentist or physician.



teria in the blood stream.

If a bacteremia occurs, a patient may risk developing an infection of the heart — endocarditis. The microorganisms implicated may enter the bloodstream and attach to the heart defect where they can flourish and cause endocarditis.

Depending on the type of medical problem one has with the heart will determine how high a risk a person has in developing endocarditis. Certain

In addition, certain dental procedures such as tooth extractions appear to be much more likely to initiate a significant bacteremia than others. However, it isn't possible to predict which patients will be affected, but precautionary measures should be taken.

In any case, where there is a chance that the gums may be lacerated and cause bleeding, there is increased susceptibility to a bacteremia, and pre-