

**HHT**  
ireland



## ORAL HEALTH GUIDE FOR HHT PATIENTS

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HHT is a rare inherited genetic disorder which can cause vascular malformations in many organs. The malformations that appear on the skin and mucosa are called telangiectases. 75% of patients have telangiectases which become clearly visible from the age of 30 onwards, increasing in size and number with age. Oral telangiectases can appear on the tongue, on the lips, on the palate and gums and their size can vary from 1-7mm.

HHT patients need to pay special attention to oral and dental hygiene to avoid possible complications that are often disabling, which, at times, can be life threatening.

## CONSEQUENCES AND RISKS OF ORAL TELANGIECTASES

## **1. Bleeding**

Telangiectases can easily rupture, especially in the oral mucosa, causing bleeding which can be sometimes difficult for the patient to control. We need to consider that the oral mucosa is very thin compared to the skin, therefore the oral vascular malformations have very little protection and this makes them more prone to bleeding.

### **How to avoid bleeding from oral telangiectases:**

- Use a soft-bristled toothbrush.
- Use dental floss only in areas where there are no telangiectases.
- Avoid hard, very hot and irritating foods.
- Use a sunscreen for the lips in case of sun exposure.
- Keep your dental prosthesis in good condition by making sure it fits properly and does not damage the gums and irritate the telangiectases.

### **What to do in case of bleeding from oral telangiectases:**

- Wash your hands thoroughly.
- Identify the source of the bleeding.
- Perform hemostasis for 15 minutes, applying pressure with your fingers through gauze. The gauze can be dipped in tranexamic acid. Also, if available, hemostatic products can be used. Repeat the operation until the bleeding stops.

- If you are unable to control the bleeding, go to the nearest A&E centre.

## **2. Brain abscess**

Several studies show that HHT patients with AVMs (Arterio-Venous Malformations)

in the lungs are at high risk of being affected by brain abscesses as a result of dental procedures. Bacteria that colonize the mouth can migrate into the bloodstream and, through the pulmonary AVMs, reach the brain.

### **How to prevent brain abscess from oral bacteria:**

#### *1. Personal oral hygiene care:*

- Brush your teeth thoroughly after every meal, including your tongue.
- Do not eat between meals and reduce the consumption of sugars.
- Drink plenty of water to prevent dehydration and plaque build-up.
- Avoid smoking.
- Keep your dental prosthesis clean and properly disinfect your mouth using a soft toothbrush on the gums and an oral antiseptic.

#### *2. Professional oral hygiene and procedures:*

- Tell your dentist that you have HHT or that you may be suffering from family history of HHT. If the dentist is unfamiliar with the disease, inform him. You can suggest that he contact your HHT doctor if you have one.
- Get regular checkups. Gum problems (gingivitis, periodontal disease), tooth decay or any other oral pathology must be treated as quickly as possible.

- Antibiotic prophylaxis must be performed during any invasive dental procedure if you have untreated pulmonary AVMs or you have not undergone lung screening.

**Suggested dosage:**

Amoxicillin by mouth. Adults: 2gr - Children: 50 mg / kg of body weight.

Single dose 60 minutes before the procedure. In case of allergy: Clindamycin oral: adults: 600 mg. Children: 20 mg / kg.

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