



FDI Policy Statement

The Role of Vaccinations in Protecting the Dental Team

Key words:

Vaccination
Immunisation
Infection control
Infectious diseases

Context

Infectious diseases pose an omnipresent threat for dental teams due to the intrinsic nature of dentistry, particularly working in close proximity to patients resulting in exposure to bodily fluids and aerosols. Immunisation reduces the risk of contracting an infectious disease by working with the body's natural defences to build protection.¹

In conjunction with infection prevention and control, vaccination is an effective way to minimise the impact and spread of certain infectious diseases. Vaccines exist to prevent more than 20 life-threatening diseases, such as hepatitis B, influenza, tetanus, measles, and tuberculosis.¹ In addition, immunisation is important to control infectious disease outbreaks (such as the COVID-19 pandemic) and has been identified by the World Health Organization (WHO) as an essential element in the battle against antimicrobial resistance.¹

Scope

This policy statement seeks to cover the important role of vaccines in protecting all members of the dental team against infectious diseases.

Definitions

Immunisation: The process by which a person becomes protected against a disease through vaccination. This term is often used interchangeably with vaccination.²

Vaccination: The act of introducing a vaccine into the body to produce protection from a specific disease.²

Vaccine: A preparation that is used to stimulate the body's immune response against diseases. Vaccines are usually administered through needle injections, but some can be administered by other means.²

Principles

All members of the dental team are at high risk for exposure to infectious diseases and should be vaccinated against

infectious agents that can be significantly harmful, in accordance with relevant regional and national policies and universal infection prevention and control procedures.

Policy

FDI recognises the following:

- The risk of infectious diseases transmitting from patients to all members of the dental team (and vice versa) in dental care settings, which may be mitigated through a range of infection prevention and control procedures, including vaccination.
- The risks (and hence mitigations) in primary dental care, as a surgical profession, may differ from those which apply in other community health care settings.
- The important roles that all members of the dental team and national dental associations can play in working with public health officials to raise public awareness about the modes of transmission of infectious diseases and to identify appropriate risk mitigations for dentistry.

FDI recommends the following:

- All members of the dental team should be educated about how vaccination can help to protect their team, patients, and the wider public.
- Vaccination (including booster vaccination) of all members of the dental team should be actively promoted by national dental associations, in accordance with relevant national policies.
- The risk of infectious disease transmission in dental settings to each member of the dental team (including students) should be assessed regularly, and appropriate mitigation strategies implemented to ensure everyone's safety.

FDI supports the following:

- The WHO COVAX programme,³ which aims to distribute millions of doses of vaccines to countries in need.
- Further research into the risk of infectious disease transmission in dental settings, including the development of vaccinations against infectious diseases.

Disclaimer

The information in this policy was based on the best available scientific evidence at the time. It may be interpreted to reflect prevailing cultural sensitivities and socioeconomic factors.

Adopted by the FDI General Assembly: September 2022, Geneva, Switzerland

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.identj.2022.11.017>

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