

FDI POLICY STATEMENT

The Role of Vaccinations in Protecting the Dental Team

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CONTEXT

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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. Immunization reduces the risk of getting an infectious disease by working with the body's natural defences to build protection.¹

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In conjunction with Infection Prevention and Control (IPC), vaccination is an effective way of minimizing the impact and spread of certain infectious diseases. Vaccines exist to prevent more than twenty life-threatening diseases, such as hepatitis B, influenza, tetanus, measles and tuberculosis.¹ In addition, immunization is important to control infectious disease outbreaks (such as the COVID-19 pandemic) and has been identified by WHO as an essential element in the battle against antimicrobial resistance.¹

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SCOPE

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

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DEFINITIONS

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

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

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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

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PRINCIPLES

33 All members of the dental team are at high risk of exposure to infectious diseases
34 and should be vaccinated against infectious agents which can be significantly
35 harmful, in accordance with relevant regional and national policies and universal
36 infection prevention and control procedures.

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38 **POLICY**

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40 FDI recognises:

- 41 • the risk of infectious diseases transmitting from patients to all members of the
42 dental team (and vice versa) in dental care settings, which may be mitigated
43 through a range of infection prevention and control procedures, including
44 vaccination;
- 45 • as a surgical profession, the risks (and hence mitigations) in primary dental care
46 may differ from those which apply in other community healthcare settings;
- 47 • the important roles that all members of the dental team and National Dental
48 Associations can play in working with public health officials to raise public
49 awareness about the modes of transmission of infectious diseases, and to
50 identify appropriate risk mitigations for dentistry.

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52 FDI recommends:

- 53 • all members of the dental team should be educated about how vaccination can
54 help to protect their team, patients and the wider public;
- 55 • vaccination (including booster vaccination) of all members of the dental team
56 should be actively promoted by National Dental Associations, in accordance
57 with relevant national policies;
- 58 • the risk of infectious disease transmission in dental settings to each member of
59 the dental team (including students) should be assessed regularly, and
60 appropriate mitigation strategies implemented to ensure everyone's safety.

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62 FDI supports:

- 63 • the WHO “COVAX program” which aims to distribute millions of doses of
64 vaccines to countries in need;
- 65 • further research into the risk of infectious disease transmission in dental
66 settings, including the development of vaccinations against infectious diseases.

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68 **KEYWORDS**

69 Vaccination, Immunization, Infection Control, Infectious Diseases

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71 **DISCLAIMER**

72 The information in this policy was based on the best available scientific evidence at
73 the time. It may be interpreted to reflect prevailing cultural sensitivities and socio-
74 economic factors.

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