

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE & DENTISTRY

How dental practices can identify and assist those experiencing domestic abuse and violence

## ASK

Be aware of indicators and make inquiries to identify those who may be at risk.

## VALIDATE

Confirm the patient's right to live abuse-free. Empathise with their concerns.

## DOCUMENT

Make accurate records using their words, not your own. Describe any injuries in as much detail as possible.

## REFER

Provide contact details of appropriate support services and encourage the patient to use them.

25%

of European women will experience domestic violence and abuse

75%

of domestic violence injuries are inflicted on the head and neck area

0%

Of UK dental schools & surgeries are legally required to provide training on domestic violence

**YOU CAN  
TAKE ACTION  
TO ADDRESS  
THIS.**

Bristol Zero Tolerance invites you to participate in its mission to rid our city of gender-based violence, abuse, harassment and exploitation. You can do so by assisting survivors of domestic abuse in your everyday dental practice, spotting signs of abuse and providing appropriate advice and referral.

## KEY SIGNS TO LOOK OUT FOR:

- + Injuries to the teeth, soft tissue, jaw, face, head or neck.
- + Soft and hard palate bruises or abrasions from implements of penetration may indicate forced sexual acts.
- + Abscesses or lost nonvital teeth caused by blows to an area of the face or from traumatic tooth fractures.
- + Torn frenum due to trauma, signs of strangulation or bite marks.
- + Fractured nose, teeth, mandible, maxilla, and signs of healing fractures on radiographs.
- + Signs of extreme stress or anxiety including hair loss, difficulty eating, dental neglect or fear of dental care.

# CALLING ALL DENTISTS

## DO:

*Follow the 'Ask, Validate, Document, Refer' steps on the front of this leaflet.*

*Use framing statements such as 'we ask patients about violence in the home routinely now' before asking direct questions such as 'did somebody cause these injuries?'*

*Consider how to provide referral information discreetly to avoid increasing the patient's risk.*

*Learn techniques to lessen the negative impact of the dental visit on patients with a history of trauma.*

## DON'T:

*Don't feel responsible for stopping the violence; being aware does not mean you must fix it.*

*Don't disclose patient information to the police or other services without their consent, unless it is a safeguarding issue.*

*Don't try to intervene with the abuser yourself. This can put both you and the patient in danger.*

Next Link

[www.nextlinkhousing.co.uk](http://www.nextlinkhousing.co.uk)  
0117 925 0680

The National Domestic Violence Helpline

[www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk](http://www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk) | 0808 2000 247

Bristol Zero Tolerance

[www.bristolzerotolerance.com](http://www.bristolzerotolerance.com)  
0117 916 6555

