

GP Alert: Infection control breaches in Cronulla dental practice operated by Dr Nicholas Southall

Key Points

1. Infection control breaches have been identified at the Cronulla Dental Surgery at Shop 3, 20 Gerrale St, Cronulla operated by Dr Nicholas Southall.
2. The risk of transmission of blood-borne viruses (hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV) to any individual patient is considered to be low
3. Patients who have had invasive procedures performed by Dr Southall since May 2003 have been strongly recommended to present to their GP for testing

- Breaches of infection control have been identified at the **Cronulla Dental Surgery** (Shop 3, 20 Gerrale St, Cronulla) operated by Dr Southall.
- The Dental Council of NSW placed conditions on the registration of Dr Southall, and he has not practised since 18 October 2017. Dr Southall has not renewed his registration and cannot practice dentistry in Australia.
- The NSW Health Blood Borne Viruses Advisory Panel have advised that there is a risk of blood borne virus transmission for individual patients who underwent invasive procedures at Dr Southall's practice.
- Invasive procedures are where a needle or other instrument pierces the skin, gums or tooth pulp/root, or where bleeding occurs. Patients who have had only non-invasive procedures such as simple removal of plaque without bleeding, routine examination, x-rays and placement of crowns are considered to be at negligible risk.
- To date, no cases of blood-borne virus infection have been identified that were associated with Dr Southall's dental practice.
- Testing for hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV has been recommended for patients who have had one or more invasive dental procedures **since May 2003**.
- The Dental Council of NSW and South Eastern Sydney Local Health District jointly issued a media release to notify patients of Dr Southall of their risks and to seek advice from their doctor if they believe they may have had an invasive procedure.
- South Eastern Sydney Local Health District has written to each patient to advise them of their risk of blood borne viruses

Who should I test for blood-borne viruses?

- Patients who believe they may have had at least one invasive procedure at Dr Southall's practice since May 2003 should be tested for blood borne viruses.
- Unless you and the patient are clear that they have had no invasive procedures, testing is warranted as a precaution.
- Some patients seeking testing may already have a blood borne virus infection from exposures unrelated to their dental treatment. Blood borne virus prevalence is higher amongst certain migrant populations. A single lifetime hepatitis B screening test is recommended for at-risk migrant populations; see <http://testingportal.ashm.org.au/hbv/indications-for-hbv-testing>

How should I test my patients and provide follow-up?

- For patients who believe they have had invasive dental procedures at Dr Southall's practice since May 2003, please arrange serology for hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV.
- Provide reassurance to the patients that their risk of blood-borne virus acquisition through the dental practice is low and effective treatment is available should they test positive.
- A Cronulla Dental Surgery Information Line has been established on 1800 610 344. Patients can ring for further information between 9am and 7pm on business days
- If any of the dental patients test positive for one of these infections, please contact your local Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055.

