

## INFECTIVE ENDOCARDITIS



### ■ WHAT IS INFECTIVE ENDOCARDITIS?

The American Heart Association has issued new guidelines regarding the administration of antibiotics to patients with heart valve problems prior to dental and surgical procedures.

Infective Endocarditis (IE) is an uncommon but potentially life-threatening infection most often affecting heart valves. The American Heart Association (AHA) has made recommendations for prevention of IE for more than 50 years with the last recommendations published in 1997.

### ■ WHAT ARE THE NEW GUIDELINES?

Guidelines of this sort are created using evidence-based information and the collective wisdom of experts in the field. The current IE guidelines are based on a growing body of scientific evidence that, for most people, the risks of taking prophylactic antibiotics for certain procedures outweigh the risk of IE. On the basis of the current recommendations, substantially fewer patients are recommended to receive antibiotics prophylactically for dental procedures. In addition, antibiotics solely to prevent IE in gastroenterology or urology procedures are no longer recommended.

It is now recommended that antibiotic prophylaxis for dental procedures only be prescribed for cardiac patients with:

- Artificial heart valves
- History of Infective Endocarditis (IE)
- Cardiac transplant patients with valve abnormalities
- Complex congenital (present from birth) heart conditions

The current guidelines represent a major change in philosophy and many questions are likely to arise. Please contact your cardiologist or family physician to ask for clarification at your next doctor's appointment. For a more complete review of the guidelines, this information can be found online at <http://circ.ahajournals.org>