

DENTISTS



Action Against Heartburn – Before it's too late **Charities promoting earlier diagnosis** **of oesophageal and gastric cancer**

www.actionagainstheartburn.org.uk



@ActionHeartburn

Note to dentists – How you can help with Oesophageal Cancer Awareness Month

Oesophageal cancer is the sixth most common cause of cancer death in the UK. Each year around 8,700 are diagnosed, and 7,700 die from it. Only 15% of adult patients survive this cancer for five years or more, but outcomes are dramatically improved if the cancer is diagnosed early.

About 70% of UK cases are adenocarcinoma that has been rising eightfold in the last three decades, and the UK has the highest incidence of oesophageal adenocarcinoma (OAC) in the world.

OAC is associated with Barrett's Oesophagus and persistent heartburn. Stomach acid rises past the lower oesophageal sphincter and, over time, can damage the lining of the oesophagus. The cells can gradually change to become more like stomach cells and to protect against the pain of heartburn. This condition is known as Barrett's Oesophagus, a precursor lesion for OAC. The risks of Barrett's Oesophagus developing into cancer are low, but they increase significantly if dysplasia develops.

There are many people with undiagnosed Barrett's Oesophagus, and they are likely to be troubled by persistent reflux that might be apparent from damage to tooth enamel. We therefore encourage dentists to help this public health campaign:

- *Action Against Heartburn* information leaflets and posters can be displayed in dental surgery waiting rooms.
- Patients who are suffering from long term, persistent heartburn and/or reflux can be referred to their GP.
- There is no need for scaring patients unduly about a cancer risk; they may have developed a number of digestion ailments that can be treated.
- Barrett's Oesophagus can be treated by radio frequency ablation that often prevents cancer developing.

More details are available from www.actionagainstheartburn.org.uk

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The organisations supporting *Action Against Heartburn* are: AUGIS – Association of Upper GI Surgeons; Barrett's Oesophagus Campaign; Barrett's Wessex; BSG – British Society of Gastroenterology; Cancer Research UK; CARD – Campaign Against Reflux Disease; CORE – Fighting Gut and Liver Disease; FORT – Fighting Oesophageal Reflux Together; Gutsy Group; Heartburn Cancer UK; Humberside Oesophageal Support Group; Michael Blake Foundation; Oesophagoose -National Oesophago-Gastric Cancer Awareness; OOSO – Oxfordshire Oesophageal and Stomach Organisation; OCHRE charity (Scotland); OPA - Oesophageal Patients Association; PCSG - Primary Care Society for Gastroenterology; UK Barrett's Oesophagus Registry.

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