

NHSBSA Dental Services

In the spotlight

Article 8: ACORN – Do it Well, Do it Once a Year December 2022

The ACORN (Assessment of Clinical Oral Risks and Needs) is a risk assessment toolkit and includes the components that should be recorded as part of a good Oral Health Assessment. It should be completed once a year as part of the overall patient assessment (or at a longer interval if the dental recall for a patient has been set longer than 12 months). View the [ACORN assessment template](#), which is available on the Primary Care One website.

Practices are expected to use the ACORN toolkit to:

1. Understand what matters to patients;
2. Effectively communicate the level of risk and need to patients (or their carers) and work with patients in helping them to understand changes they can make to prevent dental diseases and maintain oral health;
3. Agree on the oral health outcomes patients want to achieve;
4. Utilise the principles of Shared Decision Making in formulating a preventive dental care and treatment plan;
5. Monitor changes in the 'risk and need' of patients who receive on going care from the service.

The objective of an ACORN is to summarise the risk (modifiable and non-modifiable) and needs of individual patients following a detailed assessment of: medical, social and dental history; oral health-related behaviours (for example consumption of sugary food and drink); oral hygiene at home; and tobacco and alcohol use. There are eight key points, directly captured from the ACORN assessment that must be completed on the FP17W. These are:

- Medical History – Yellow or Green
- Social History - Yellow or Green
- Dental History - Yellow or Green
- Tooth decay – Green, Amber or Red
- Total number of teeth in the mouth – inputted as a number
- Total number of teeth with dentinal decay – decayed teeth inputted as a number
- Periodontal Health - Green, Amber or Red
- Other dental need - Green, Amber or Red

The findings of the ACORN and the clinical examination of a patient forms the basis for discussion with patients and guides the formulation of an annual care plan for that patient. The care plan is discussed, agreed and shared with the patient and combines evidence-based prevention and care, but also includes what patients are required to do. A further ACORN completed and reported a year later effectively monitors the impact and outcome of care that patient has received.

Support and information

[The Primary Care one website](#) has a section which will contain all the information on ACORN and guidance, as well as links to training from HEIW and Welsh Government updates

[The All Wales Faculty](#) contains links and support information for practices during these uncertain times.

[The HEIW website](#) will show all available training opportunities.