

PRESS RELEASE



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NO NEED FOR TOO MUCH GRIP, WARNS MDDUS.

Dentists are being reminded that they should give patients specific instructions on how to use denture adhesives properly to avoid potential long-term health problems

The UK-wide medical defence organisation MDDUS has issued the guideline following health fears arising from excessive usage of popular adhesive brands Polygrip Ultra and Polygrip Total Care.

Millions of people using these denture adhesives are being warned that long term excessive use of these products could lead to a build-up of zinc in the body – which could trigger neurological problems such as numbness and difficulties with balance and walking.

GlaxoSmithKline, the manufacturer of the two products, has recently announced that it is removing zinc from the adhesives. This follows dozens of lawsuits filed in the United States alleging the products cause nerve damage - resulting in symptoms such as weakness and numbness, as well as blood problems such as anaemia.

A study of four denture wearing patients, published recently in the *Journal of Neurology*, found they were suffering from neurological symptoms. However all were using about two tubes of the adhesive per week, which is certainly in excess of what is recommended by any dentist.

The study found that the zinc contained within the adhesive is not absorbed in the mouth, but enters the body when swallowed. Patients using excessive amounts of adhesive would therefore be swallowing excessive amounts of the product.

MDDUS suggest that on average a 40g tube should last a patient approximately six weeks, but it would appear from these reports that some people may be applying it more frequently because of ill-fitting dentures.

Aubrey Craig, head of the dental division at MDDUS, warns: "When dentists recommend that patients use either Polygrip Ultra or Polygrip Total Care, they must ensure that the patient follows specific instructions with regard to how much adhesive to use.

"In general, for a complete upper denture, three small pea sized amounts of the adhesive should be applied to the fitting surface of the denture, one at either side towards the back of the denture and one in the mid-line at the front of the denture. With regard to a complete lower denture, the same principle should apply."

Craig advises: "From the reports in the press it would appear that some patients have been using up to two tubes of this material per week, which is grossly in excess of that of the average patient.

"Individuals using this amount of adhesive should have their dentures assessed with regard to the fit, and this improved in an attempt to reduce the amount of adhesive required.

"Any patient contacting their dentist concerned they may have been using the product excessively, should be advised to stop using it, consult with their general medical practitioner and switch to a zinc-free alternative."

MDDUS understands that GSK is re-formulating all its denture adhesives to be zinc-free, which will be clearly labelled on the packaging.

Ends

For further information contact Colin Calder on 0141 616 2677 or 07850 510881.

Note to editors

MDDUS (Medical and Dental Defence Union of Scotland) is a medical defence organisation providing access to professional indemnity and expert medico- and dento-legal advice for doctors, dentists and other healthcare professionals throughout the UK.

For further information on MDDUS go to www.mddus.com.