

Management of Acute Dental Problems

Quick Reference Guide
for healthcare professionals





The Scottish Dental Clinical Effectiveness Programme (SDCEP) is an initiative of the National Dental Advisory Committee (NDAC) and is supported by the Scottish Government and NHS Education for Scotland. The programme aims to provide user-friendly, evidence-based guidance on topics identified as priorities for oral health care in Scotland.

SDCEP guidance is designed to support improvements in patient care by bringing together, in a structured manner, the best available information that is relevant to the topic and presenting this information in a form that can be interpreted easily and implemented.

'Supporting the provision of quality care'



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Scottish Dental Clinical Effectiveness Programme

Dundee Dental Education Centre, Frankland Building,
Small's Wynd, Dundee DD1 4HN

Email scottishdental.cep@nes.scot.nhs.uk

Tel 01382 425751 / 425771

Website www.sdcep.org.uk

Management of Acute Dental Problems

This Quick Reference Guide is intended for use by staff in any healthcare setting who may have to manage patients with acute dental problems. Most patients with an acute dental problem will have one or more of the following symptoms:

- **Pain**
- **Trauma**
- **Swelling**
- **Ulceration**
- **Bleeding**
- **Altered Sensation or Abnormal Appearance**

Based on each of these symptoms, the decision support flowcharts in this Guide can be used to identify any immediate attention or advice to give to the patient and to determine the appropriate provider of subsequent care. If a patient reports more than one symptom, use the first reported symptom as the start point.

In all cases of trauma, healthcare providers need to be conscious of the possibility of non-accidental injury and consider appropriate local referral if this is suspected.

Note: If the dental problem is secondary to a more significant problem (e.g. a significant facial injury) or is resulting in severe symptoms (e.g. difficulty breathing, severe dehydration), initial contact should be with appropriate emergency medical services via NHS 24 (Tel: 08454 24 24 24).

Endpoints are defined as:

- **Emergency Care** – arrange for the patient to have contact with a clinical advisor within 60 minutes and subsequent treatment within a timescale that is appropriate to the severity of the condition
- **Urgent Care** – advise the patient to seek dental or medical care as indicated within 24 hours unless the condition worsens
- **Non-urgent Care** – advise the patient to see a dentist within 7 days if required unless the condition worsens
- **Self Care** – the patient should be able to manage the problem without the need for further involvement of a healthcare professional. However, advise the patient that if the symptoms persist or worsen, they should contact a dentist or general medical practitioner.

These categories should apply at any time in the 24 hour period. When there is a preferred provider of care, this is indicated in the flowcharts.

During normal working hours, all dental practices have arrangements to provide emergency care for their registered patients. Health Boards also have local emergency dental arrangements in place for non-registered patients and NHS 24 can advise on how to contact these.

Out-of-hours (18.00 to 08.00 hours during the week and throughout the weekend), some dental practices have their own emergency arrangements. In addition, a full triage and patient booking service is available through NHS 24.

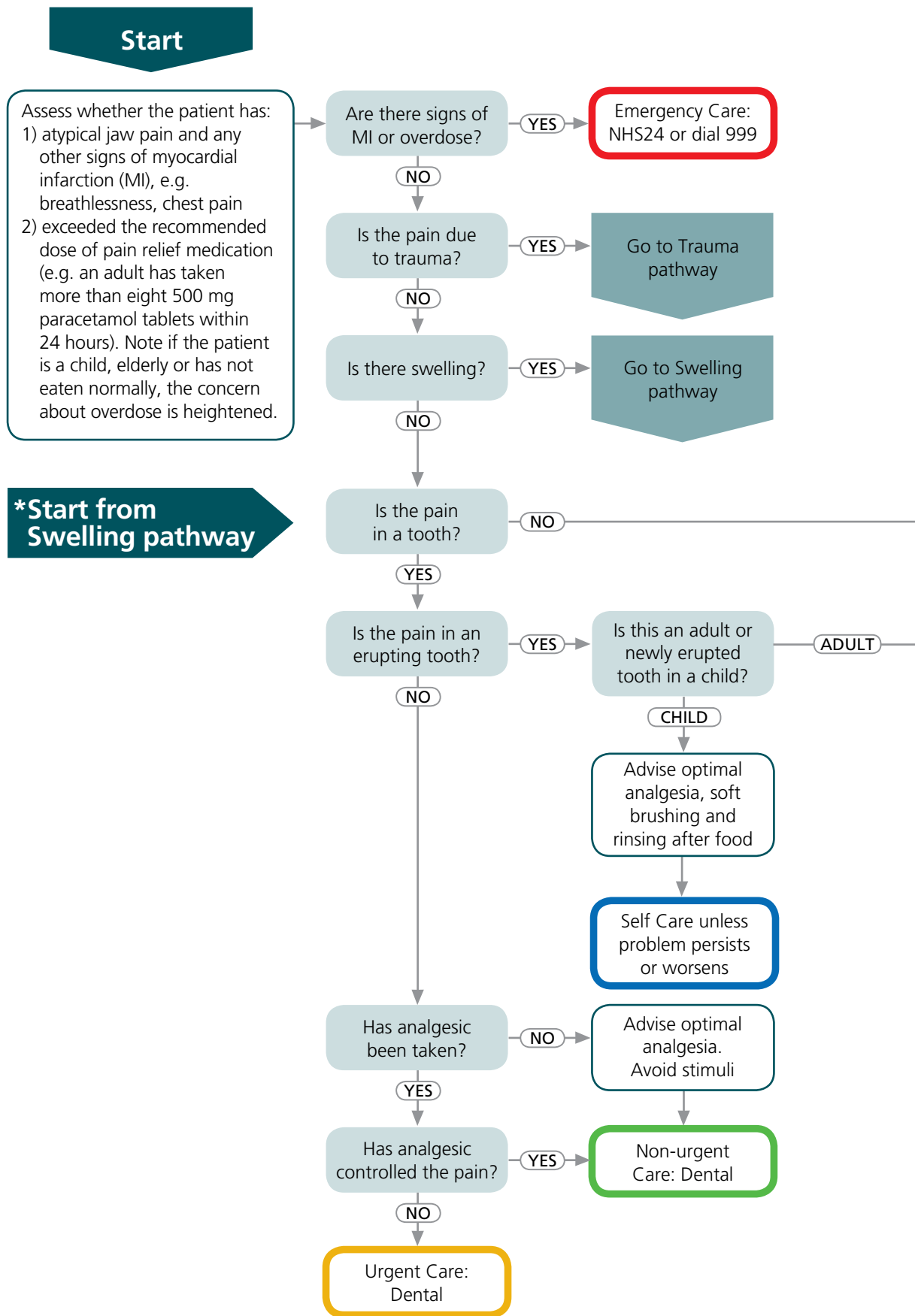
It should be noted that some allowance on treatment times may need to be made for remoteness, rurality, patient travel and degrees of urgency within each category. Similarly, providers of care may vary depending on location. Users of this Quick Reference Guide might find it useful to note the contact details of local providers of care in the space provided on page 11.

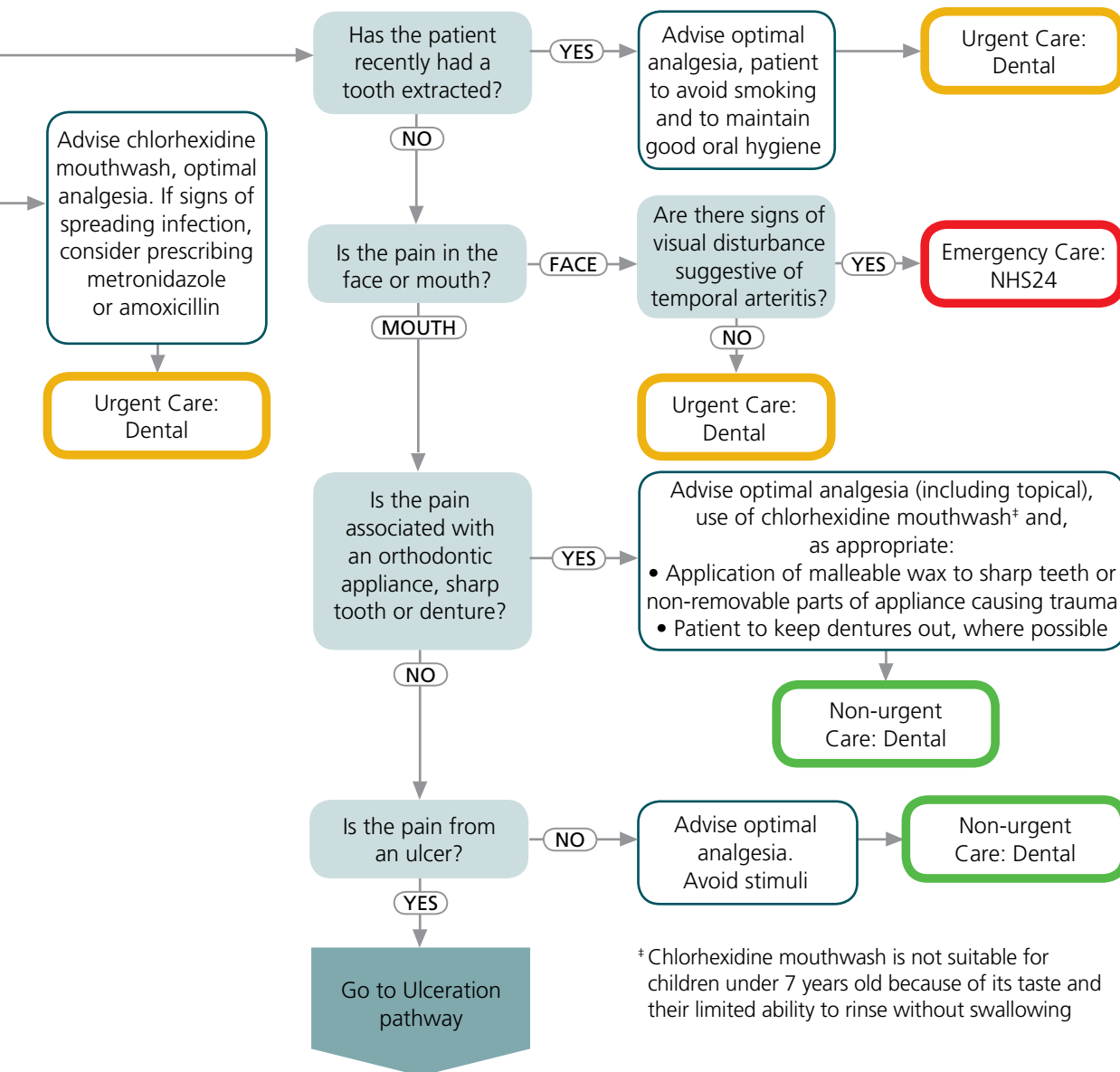
An electronic decision support tool based on the information contained within these flowcharts is also provided. This can be accessed on the internet via a personal computer, tablet or smart phone.

Note that, as guidance, the information in this document does not override the individual responsibility of the healthcare professional to make decisions appropriate to the individual patient.

The full version of the 'Management of Acute Dental Problems' guidance is available at www.sdcep.org.uk.

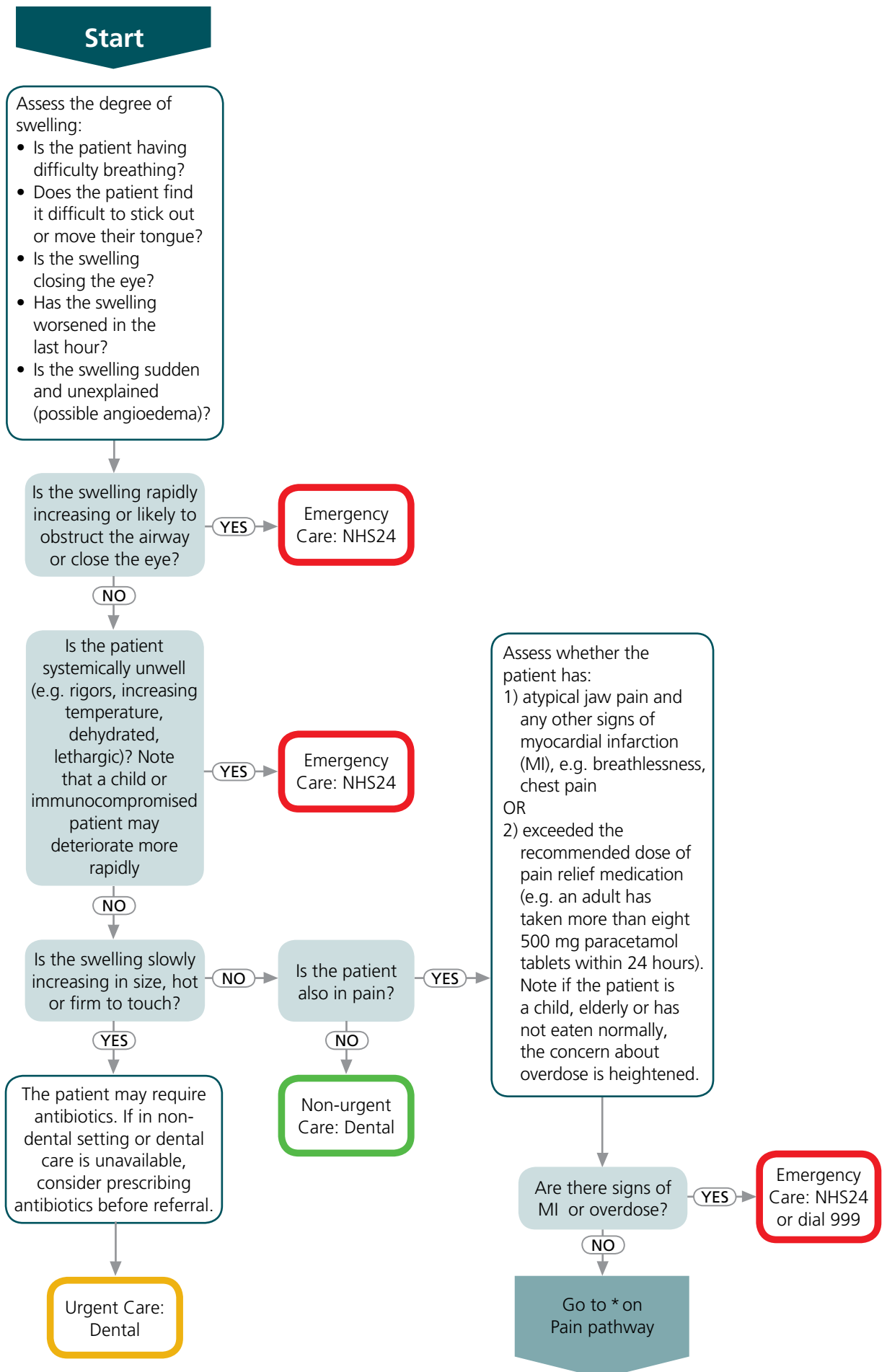
Patient with Pain



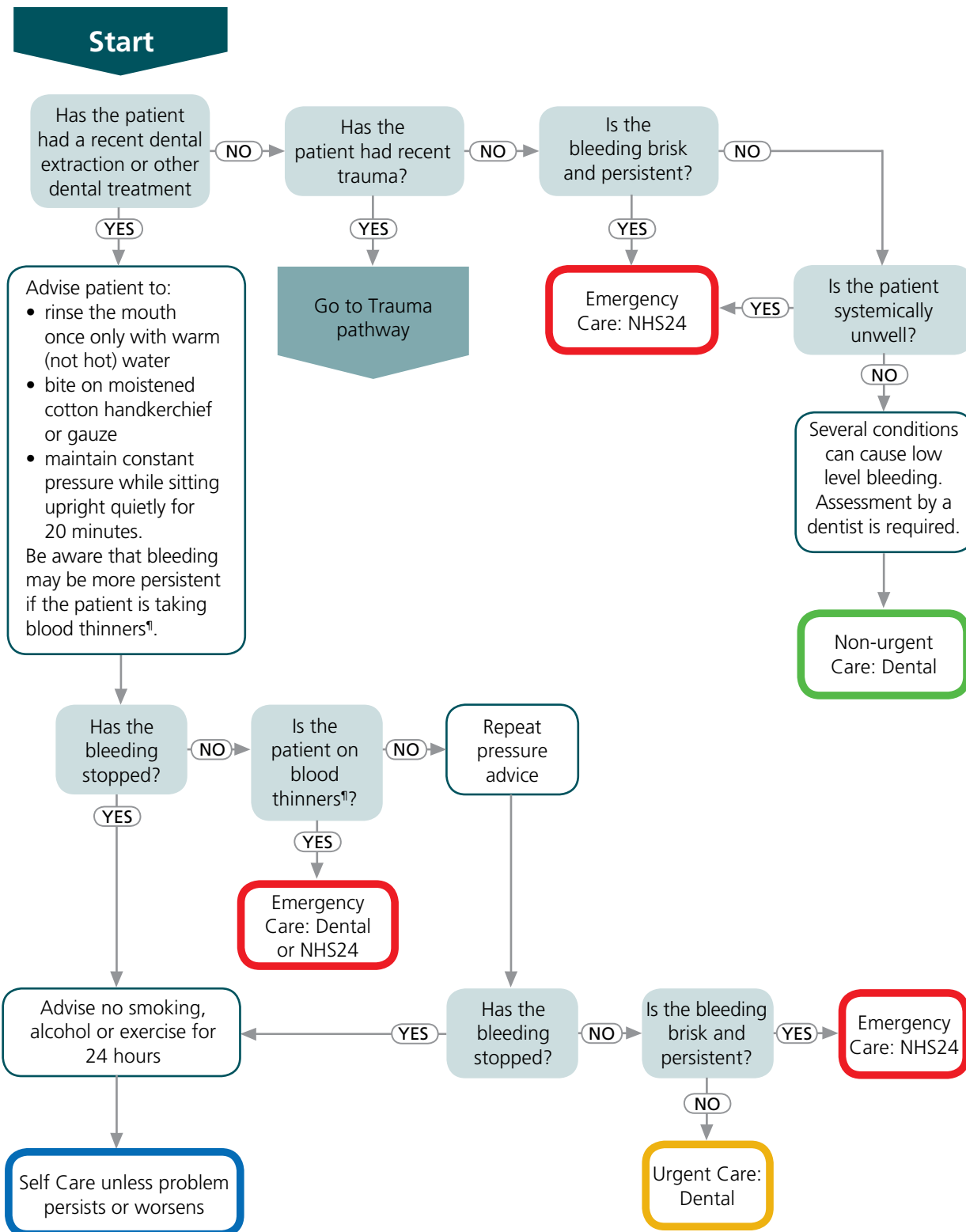


* Chlorhexidine mouthwash is not suitable for children under 7 years old because of its taste and their limited ability to rinse without swallowing

Patient with Swelling

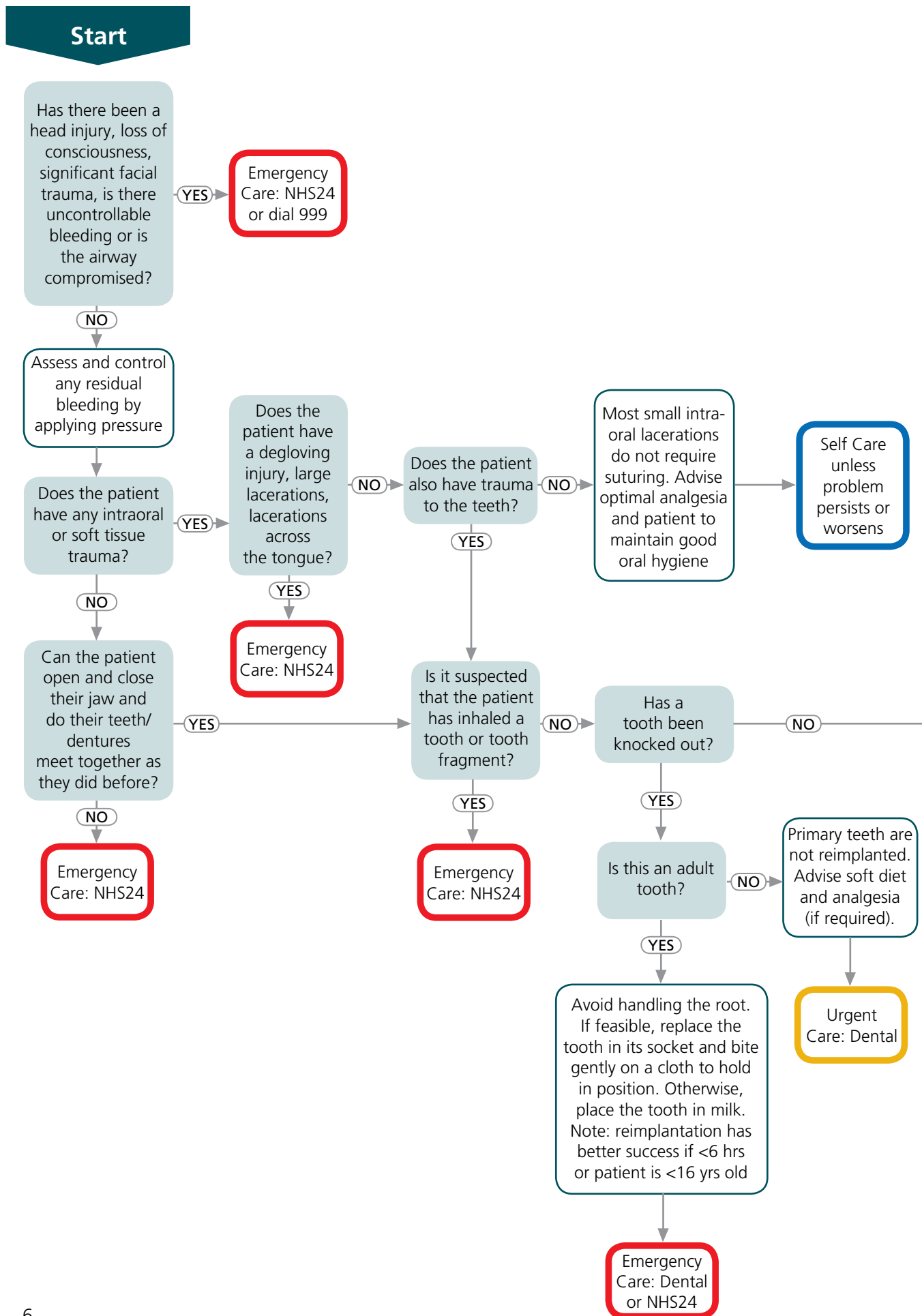


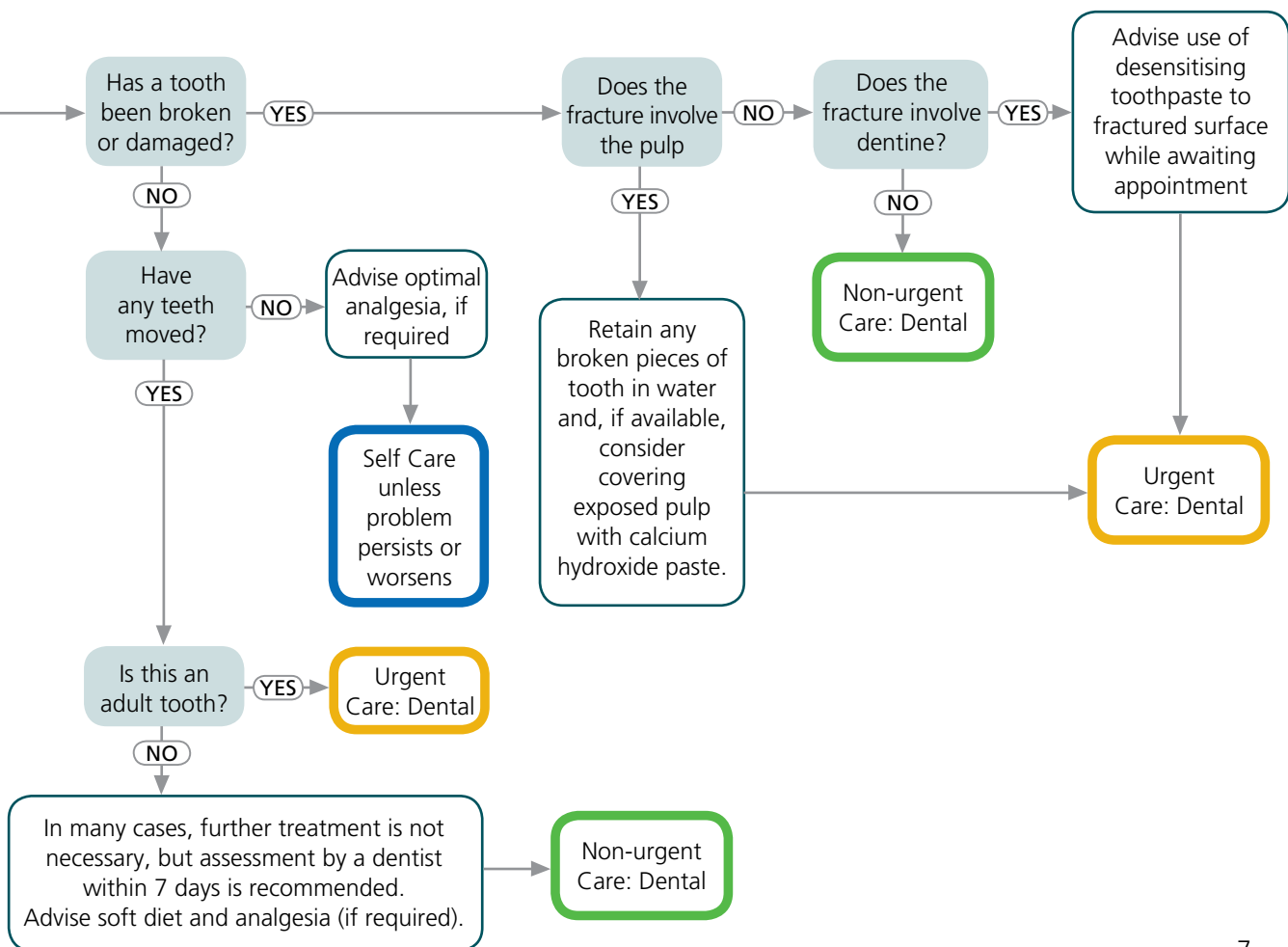
Patient with Bleeding



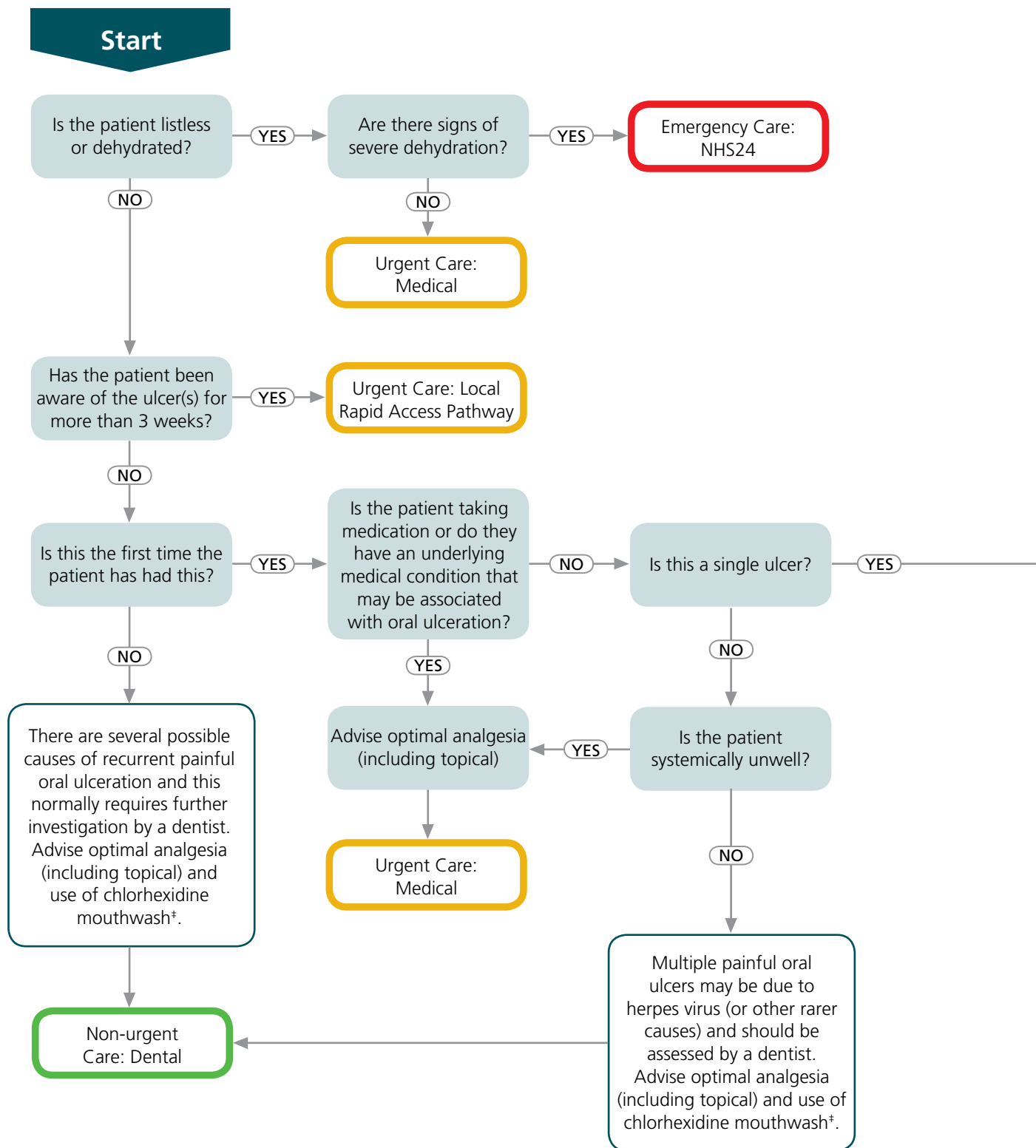
[†] Blood thinners include warfarin, aspirin, clopidogrel

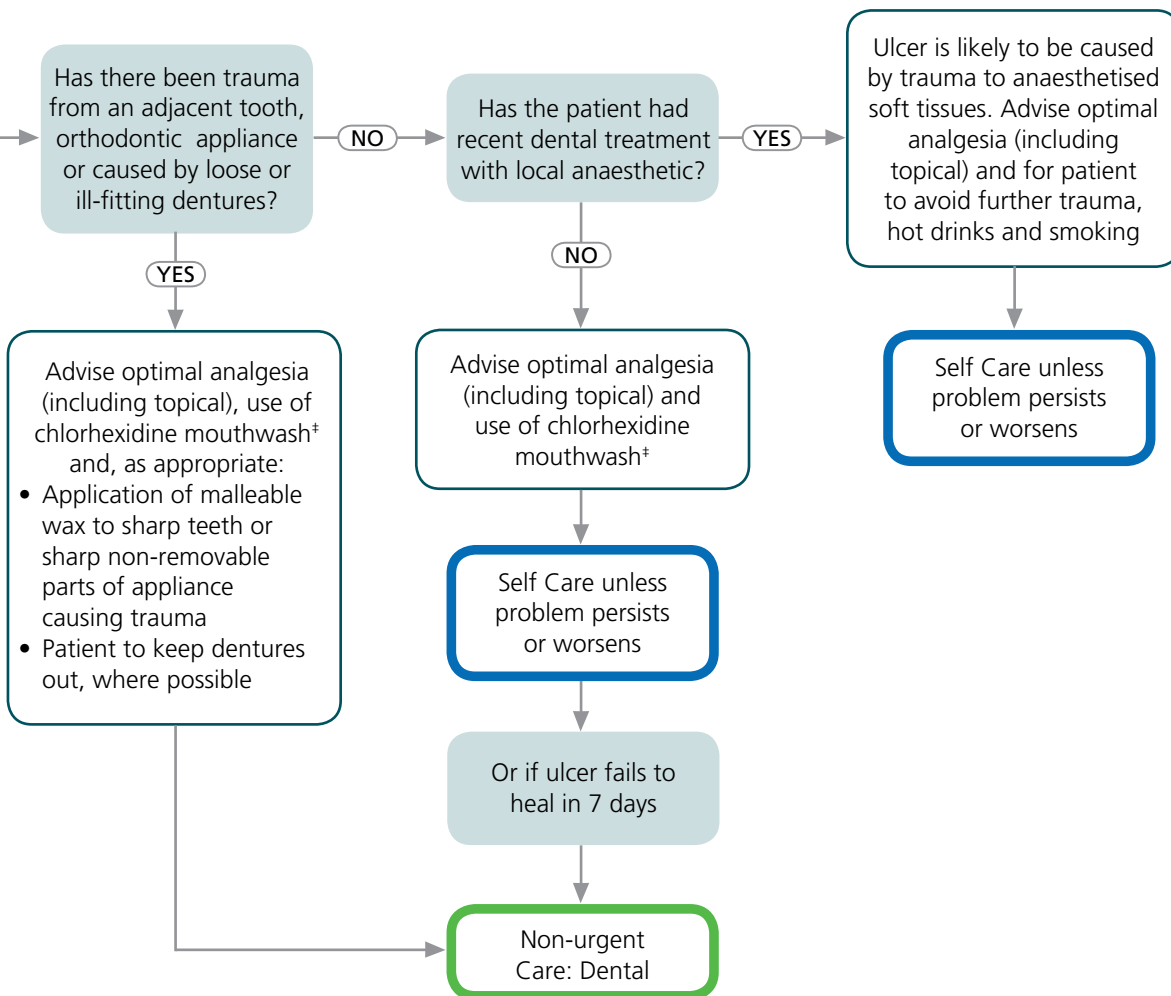
Patient with Trauma (including chipped, cracked or broken teeth)





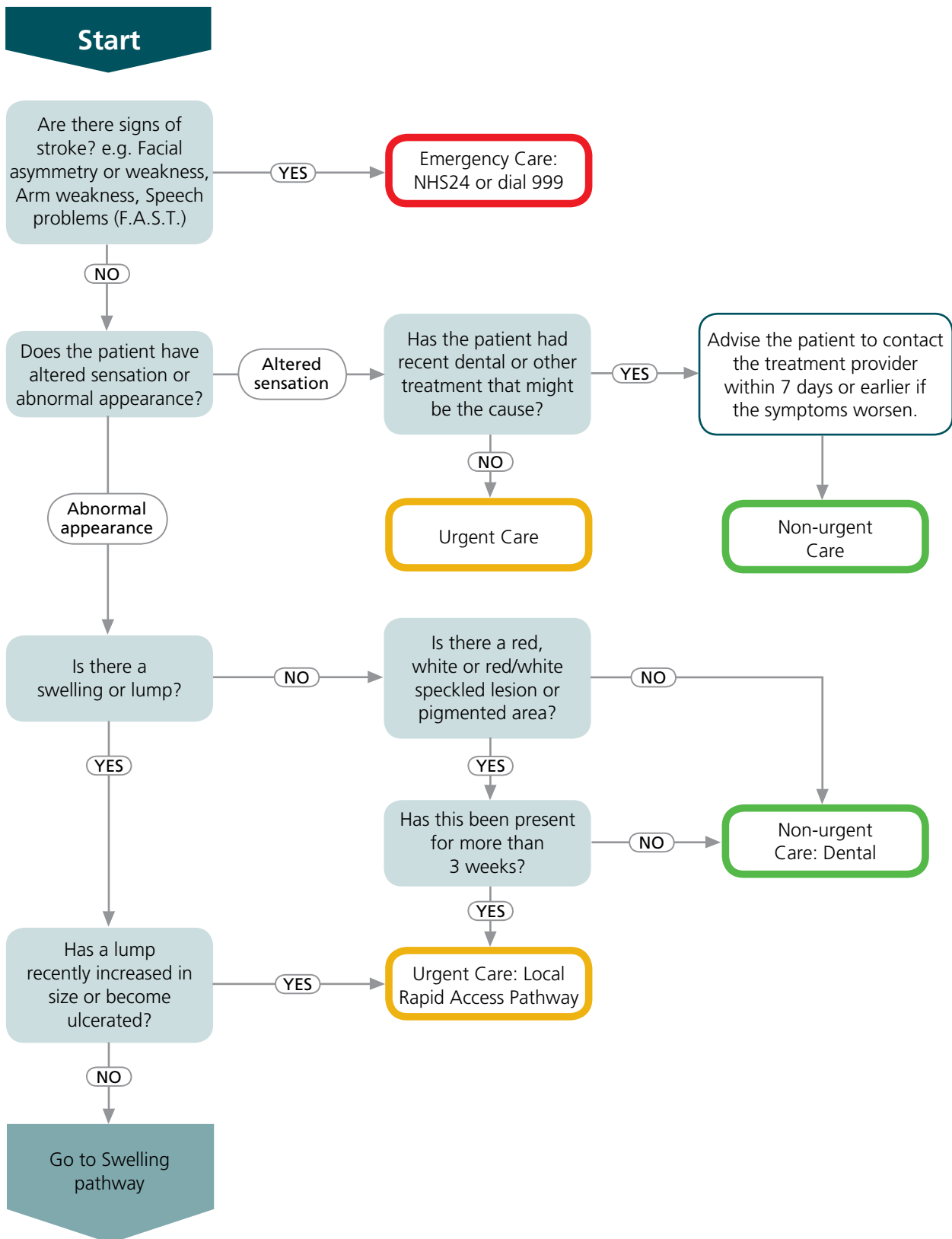
Patient with Ulceration





[‡]Chlorhexidine mouthwash is not suitable for children under 7 years old because of its taste and their limited ability to rinse without swallowing

Patient with Altered Sensation or Abnormal Appearance (a lesion, lump or mark) in the Head or Neck



Contacts

Note here the details of any local providers of care that you might need to contact, for example:

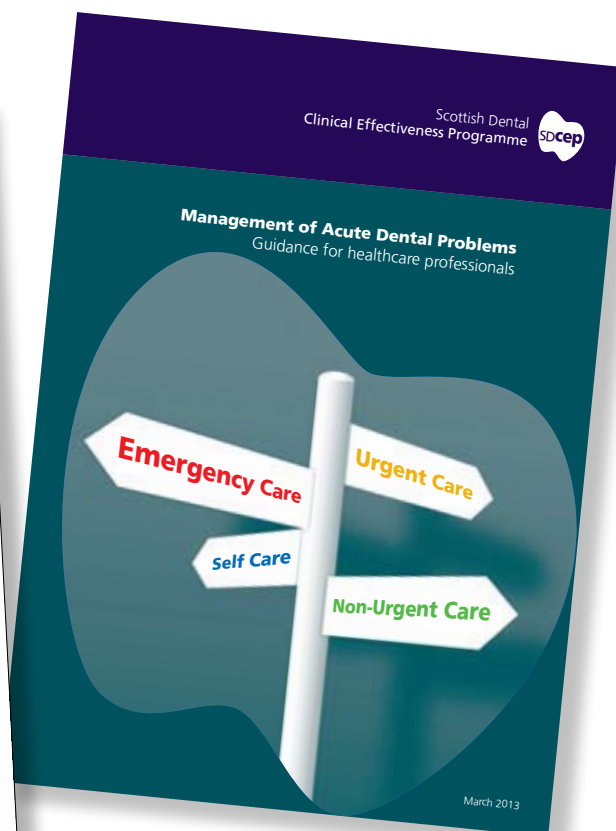
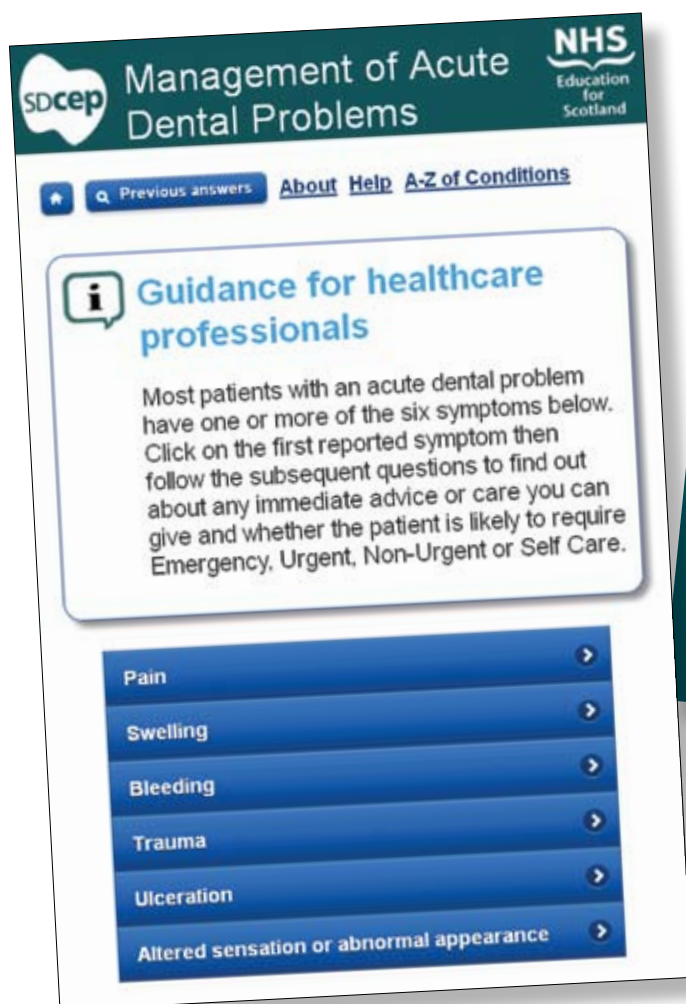
- **Dental practices**
- **Local dental helpline**
- **General medical practices**
- **Emergency department**
- **Local rapid access pathway**

Provider	Contact details
NHS 24	Telephone 08454 242424

Notes

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is available to use interactively via your personal computer, tablet or smart phone.



The full version of the guidance is also available online at www.sdcep.org.uk

SDCEP provides guidance on a range of priority topics for oral health care.

To find out more visit www.sdcep.org.uk



To access this, visit <http://tiny.cc/bylwsww>

This Quick Reference Guide includes decision support flowcharts extracted from the Scottish Dental Clinical Effectiveness Programme's *'Management of Acute Dental Problems'* guidance that represent the pathways to the appropriate providers of care, based on the patient's presenting symptoms. These flowcharts are intended for use by staff in any healthcare setting who may have to manage patients with acute dental problems, including non-dental professionals such as general medical practice, emergency department and pharmacy staff. The *'Management of Acute Dental Problems'* guidance aims to:

- encourage a consistent approach to the management of acute dental problems to reduce avoidable variation in practice;
- improve the quality of unscheduled clinical care for patients with acute dental problems;
- provide a standard for the initial management of presenting symptoms for patients with acute dental problems;
- ensure patients receive appropriate advice about subsequent care and/or referral to appropriate treatment providers, if applicable.

In addition to the decision support pathways included in this Guide, the full guidance provides further background information and more detailed advice about the initial management and subsequent care for a wide range of conditions that may present as acute dental problems. The full version of the guidance is available online at www.sdcep.org.uk.

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