



URGENT CARE PROMISE

No one in urgent dental pain is turned away

1. Purpose

This policy makes it a standing commitment, not a judgement call, that Beyond Dental Care (BDC) will never turn away a person who is in urgent dental pain or distress. Every team member, clinical and non-clinical, is expected to know this policy and act on it without needing to ask permission.

2. Our Promise

"If you are in dental pain, or you cannot eat or get comfortable enough to sleep because of a dental problem, we will see you today. It does not matter whether you are already one of our patients. We will find a way to help."

3. Who This Applies To

This promise applies to:

- Existing BDC patients of any of our clinics.
- Anyone in the community experiencing urgent dental pain or an inability to eat or sleep due to a dental problem, whether or not they have attended BDC before.

Non-patients are welcomed as urgent-care patients and, wherever appropriate, invited to join BDC as ongoing patients afterwards, but urgent care is never made conditional on continued treatment.

4. What Counts as Urgent

Reception and clinical staff should treat the following as urgent and act immediately, without waiting for a callback or manager approval:

- Dental or facial pain that is moderate to severe, or worsening.
- Inability to eat or drink because of tooth or gum pain.
- Inability to sleep, or being kept awake overnight, by dental pain.
- Facial or gum swelling, especially if spreading or affecting the eye, throat, or ability to swallow.
- Dental trauma (knocked-out, chipped, or displaced tooth), especially in children.
- Uncontrolled bleeding following dental treatment or injury.
- Restoration causing pain or preventing eating.

When in doubt, treat it as urgent. It is always safer to over-triage than to send someone away.

5. How We Deliver on the Promise

5.1 Same-day fit-in

Reception will always offer a same-day appointment to anyone meeting the criteria in Section 4, fitted into gaps in the existing schedule across the day.

5.2 Staying back when needed

Each day of the week, one dentist and DA will be 'on call' for urgent-care patients. If no gap exists before closing, the treating dentist and a dental assistant will stay back after normal hours to see the patient. This is a standard, expected part of the role, not an exception that requires special approval.

5.3 Escalation if a clinic cannot accommodate

If the rostered dentist genuinely cannot stay (e.g. a prior commitment), the Practice Manager or most senior team member on site will:

1. Call another BDC clinic to arrange a transfer or a second dentist coming in.
2. If no BDC option exists that day, personally contact a trusted local emergency dental provider to arrange a warm handover. Never simply hand the patient a phone number and end the interaction.
3. Follow up with the patient the next business day to confirm they were seen and are recovering.

A patient should never be told simply to "call somewhere else" or "try tomorrow" without staff first attempting the steps above.

6. Role Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Reception / Front Desk	Recognise urgent presentations by phone or walk-in using Section 4 criteria; offer a same-day slot immediately; never ask the caller to 'try another clinic' as a first response; notify the treating dentist or Practice Manager straight away.
Dental Assistant	Prepare the room for an unscheduled fit-in at short notice; stay back with the dentist when required; support the patient with clear, reassuring communication about wait time.
Treating Dentist	Fit the patient into gaps through the day where possible; stay back after hours when no gap exists; escalate to the Practice Manager only if genuinely unable to stay.
Practice Manager	Own the escalation pathway in Section 5.3; maintain the current list of nearby emergency providers; review any case where a patient was not seen same-day; report exceptions to GM.

7. After Hours / When All Clinics Are Closed

If urgent contact is made outside opening hours (voicemail, after-hours message, or online enquiry), the message must be checked and actioned as the first priority when the clinic reopens, or sooner if an on-call arrangement exists. Where a caller describes severe or worsening symptoms (spreading swelling, difficulty breathing or swallowing, uncontrolled bleeding, high fever), staff should advise the person to attend a hospital emergency department immediately, as these can be signs of a dental infection becoming medically serious.

8. Documentation

Every urgent presentation, however it was resolved, is briefly noted in the patient's file: date, nature of the urgent need, how it was accommodated (same-day fit-in, staff stayed back, transferred to another BDC clinic, or referred externally), and outcome.

9. Review

This policy is reviewed annually by BDC Management, and immediately after any incident in which a patient in urgent need was not accommodated, to identify and close any gap in the process.