

European Federation of Periodontology (EFP) guideline

Management of acute periodontal conditions

The EFP has published a new guideline offering clinicians a structured approach to the diagnosis and management of acute periodontal conditions, where timely treatment is crucial to control pain, infection and rapid tissue destruction.

The EFP S2k level clinical practice guideline, published in the *Journal of Clinical Periodontology*, addresses three conditions defined within the 2018 classification of periodontal and peri-implant diseases and conditions: necrotising periodontal diseases, periodontal abscesses and endodontic-periodontal lesions.

Unlike many chronic forms of periodontal diseases, acute periodontal conditions are characterised by rapid onset and may involve pain symptoms ranging from discomfort to intense pain, and are characterised by rapid onset, rapid destruction of periodontal tissues, and risk of progression, extension and/or dissemination. Patients presenting with these conditions therefore require prompt diagnosis and immediately implemented appropriate treatment.

The new guideline provides clinicians with a clear framework organised around three successive steps:

1. Confirm the diagnosis, using the case definitions established by the 2018 classification.
2. Control the acute condition, including pain and active tissue destruction, through appropriate initial treatment.
3. Provide subsequent treatment, to manage underlying pre-existing conditions, reduce the risk of recurrence and control potential sequelae of the acute episode.

The guideline was developed following a rigorous process that included two commissioned systematic reviews which assessed the available evidence, to help in formulating specific recommendations, followed by a structured consensus process involving experts in the field and a broad range of stakeholders. In some areas scientific evidence was limited, so recommendations combine the best available evidence with structured expert consensus, leading to a guideline at S2k level.

"Acute periodontal conditions have a rapid onset and are usually painful, but the most important features are rapid tissue destruction and risk of progression and dissemination, which can even make them life-threatening (e. g., necrotising periodontal diseases in children with severe and chronic compromise of the immune system), so clinicians need clear guidance to help them make appropriate decisions without delay," said Professor David Herrera, first author of the publication. "This guideline brings together the available evidence and expert consensus in a practical stepwise approach, from accurate diagnosis and control of the acute episode, through to management of the underlying pre-existing condition and prevention of recurrence."

The guideline is an outcome of the 21st European Workshop on Periodontogy, held in November 2025, which focused on clinical guidelines for gingival diseases and acute periodontal conditions. It builds on the EFP programme of evidence-based clinical practice guidelines which already includes recommendations for the treatment of periodontitis in stages I–III (Sanz et al. 2020), and in stage IV (Herrera et al. 2022), as well as the prevention and treatment of peri-implant diseases (Herrera et al. 2023).

EFP President Mia Rakić said: "Providing dental professionals with robust, practical guidance that can be applied in everyday clinical care is a fundamental part of the EFP mission. With this new guideline, we address conditions that require rapid and well-informed clinical decisions, helping us deliver timely, consistent and effective care for our patients."

ABSTRACT

Background

The European Federation of Periodontology (EFP) has developed Clinical Practice Guidelines (CPGs) for the treatment of periodontitis and for the management of peri-implant diseases. In accordance with the 2018 classification, acute periodontal conditions are characterised by rapid-onset pain or discomfort, tissue destruction and infection. Therefore, the development of a CPG to guide patients and clinicians in their management is justified.

Aim

To develop an S2k-level CPG for the management of acute periodontal conditions, necrotising periodontal diseases, periodontal abscesses and acute manifestations of endodontic–periodontal lesions.

Methods

This S2k-level CPG was developed by the EFP, following methodological guidance from the Association of Scientific Medical Societies in Germany and the Grading of Recommendations, Assessment, Development and Evaluation (GRADE) process. A rigorous and transparent process included synthesis of relevant research in two commissioned systematic reviews, evaluation of the quality and strength of evidence, formulation of specific recommendations and a structured consensus process involving leading experts and a broad base of stakeholders. Recommendations were based on the best available evidence, combined with structured expert consensus, particularly in areas where direct evidence remains scarce.

Results

The S2k-level CPG for the management of acute periodontal conditions presents a structured approach, grouping the recommendations in three successive steps: (1) confirming diagnosis, following the case definitions of the 2018 classification; (2) initial treatment, to control the acute condition including pain and active tissue destruction; and (3) subsequent treatments, to manage the pre-existing conditions and prevent the risk of disease recurrence and/or control the potential sequelae.

Conclusion

The present S2k-level CPG informs clinical practice, health systems, policymakers and, indirectly, the public on the available and most effective interventions in the management of acute periodontal conditions.

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