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Cost-effectiveness in dental health: a review of strategies available for preventing caries

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Summary

Oral health currently represents an appreciable drain on NHS resources, accounting for 4% of total NHS expenditure each year. In order to effect an improvement in overall dental health, policies need to be targeted towards those most at risk of poor oral status. This paper explores a number of strategies available for preventing caries:

- promoting improved self-administered oral hygiene
- encouraging better use of the General Dental Service
- reducing sugar consumption
- fluoridation of water
- making use of the community dental service
- prophylactic fissure sealants.

The evidence available on which to base decisions is less than perfect. However, the most effective and cost effective approach appears to be the fluoridation of water supplies.