

## Considerations When Providing Dental Care During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Dental regulators across Canada have advised dental practices to reschedule all non-essential dental treatment at this time. For those dental offices that remain open for emergency patients—staff and clinicians are eager to know what they can do to comply with governmental mandates to flatten the curve by observing social distancing.

The list below includes some important considerations when treating dental patients at this time of heightened anxiety.

### **Risk Assessment**

1. Before patient appointments, the office should contact them to ensure that the patient:
  - a. Has not travelled outside of Canada since March 2020;
  - b. Has not recently been exposed to symptoms;
  - c. Has no cold or flu-like symptoms, fever; and
  - d. Has a true dental emergency.
2. Reschedule patients who:
  - a. Screen as a risk for having COVID-19 or influenza; and
  - b. Who do not present with a true dental emergency.
3. Appropriate signage on the entrance door will allow those who have missed the above communication to stop and think about any potential symptoms or travel/contact history before entering the office.
4. Staff should screen all patients.
  - a. If there's a dental emergency, make sure the patient's needs are accommodated at that practice (if prepared) or at another facility.
5. Schedule appointments to minimize the number of people in your waiting area at one time.
6. Restrict visitors to the practice to those who are essential; limit family members attending with patients.
7. Have patients wait in their cars until ready to be seen. Text or call them when ready and seat them in the treatment room immediately.

### **Reception Area—Social Distancing**

8. Minimize any hand contact and unnecessary touching. Shaking hands should be forbidden until the COVID-19 crisis is over.
9. Rearrange seating in the waiting area to represent the appropriate space between patients, i.e., two meters.
10. When patients complete medical and dental history and/or new patient forms, disinfect the pen for patients to use - wipe down after each use.

11. Remove toys, reading materials, and prizes from the reception/waiting area.
12. Thoroughly and frequently disinfect high contact surfaces in the reception area, including furniture, door handles, railings, front desk, etc.

### **Clinical Areas**

13. Take the patient's temperature before treatment.
14. Have the patient rinse prior to treatment with hydrogen peroxide solution.
15. Ensure appropriate PPE is used – e.g., gowns or lab coats should be worn and discarded or laundered, respectively, after treatment of each patient, before leaving the operatory.
16. Minimize procedures that cause aerosolization, by only providing essential dental treatment.
17. Use high-volume suction when using instruments that produce aerosol, such as handpieces, ultrasonic scalers, and air/water syringes.
18. Isolate teeth with rubber dams, whenever possible, to reduce aerosols created during essential treatments.

### **Follow-Up**

19. Follow up call to be completed within 24 hours to re-assess patients after surgeries and check for any symptoms.
20. Contact your local public health authority if a patient tests positive for COVID-19.