Interim Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Guidance for Dental Providers

March 25, 2020

A respiratory disease named "coronavirus disease 2019" (COVID-19) caused by a novel coronavirus named "SARS-CoV-2" was first detected in China in late 2019 and has subsequently spread to many other countries, including the United States. The World Health Organization announced a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on January 30 and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services declared a public health emergency on January 31, 2020.

These recommendations are based on what we know about COVID-19 and are subject to change as we learn more.

Dental providers have an important role in the overall effort to contain COVID-19, and those who work in local health departments and health clinics are essential to ensuring that care is available to high-risk members of our community. In order to protect staff and preserve personal protective equipment and patient care supplies, as well as expand available hospital capacity during the COVID-19 pandemic, NC DHHS recommends that dental facilities take action to postpone elective procedures, surgeries, and non-urgent dental visits, and prioritize urgent and emergency visits* and procedures now and for the coming several weeks. Doing so assures hospital emergency departments and urgent care facilities remain available to serve individuals seeking medical care and treatment for potential COVID-19.

Stay informed

- ☐ Per CDC guidelines, healthcare facilities and clinicians should prioritize urgent and emergency visits and procedures now and for the coming several weeks, including postponing routine dental visits and prioritize patients with dental emergencies.

- ☐ Stay informed about the local COVID-19 situation. For the most reliable information review:
    - o **North Carolina Department of Health COVID-19 website**
      https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/public-health/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-response-north-carolina
    - o **CDC COVID-19 website** https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html

Communicate with staff and patients

- ☐ Communicate about COVID-19 with your staff.
    - o Share information that specifically addresses COVID-19 prevention and precautions in the dental setting.

- Share your emergency preparedness plan with staff and ensure they understand their role and responsibilities.
- Ensure staff are aware of sick leave policies and encouraged to stay home if they are ill.

☐ Communicate about COVID-19 with your patients.
- Request that patients with recent travel to areas with sustained community transmission of COVID-19 reschedule routine appointments past 14 days of their return.
- Request they reschedule non-emergency appointments if they are feeling ill or are in close contact with someone who is ill, to a later date and time.
- Place signs at entrances and waiting areas that encourage hand and respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette.

Prepare your facility

☐ Establish social distancing in your waiting area.
☐ Prepare for staff absenteeism due to illness or their caregiving needs at home. Planning for absenteeism could include changing office hours, cross-training current employees, or hiring temporary employees.
☐ Identify patients with acute respiratory illness at check-in.
- Screen patients for signs or symptoms of infection or contact with another ill person within the last 14 days when you update their medical histories.
- Initiate temperature checks prior to performing dental procedures. If a patient presents with a temperature (≥100° F), see **Respond to patients' needs** section below.
- Have patients rinse with 1% hydrogen peroxide before each appointment.
☐ Provide alcohol-based hand rub with 60-95% alcohol, tissues, and no-touch receptacles for disposal at your facility entrance, waiting room, and patient check-in.
☐ Routinely clean and disinfect using an EPA registered disinfectant effective against coronaviruses, especially in "high-touch" areas (e.g., chairs, door handles).
☐ Remove items that are not easily disinfected from waiting areas such as toys, magazines, and reading materials.

Respond to patients' needs

☐ If a patient presents with any illness, recommend sending them home to recuperate, regardless of the type of illness. Encourage hand hygiene and cough etiquette.
- Contact your local health department immediately if you suspect a patient has COVID-19 (e.g., if person had close contact with someone with confirmed COVID-19 within 14 days of illness onset) for further guidance.
☐ Postponing non-emergency or elective dental procedures until patient is determined to be no longer infectious.
☐ If urgent dental treatment is necessary, use prevention measures and coordinate with the patient's medical provider to determine appropriate precautions and location of procedure on a case-by-case basis.

References

*American Dental Association (ADA) What Constitutes a Dental Emergency-for dentists

https://success.ada.org/~/media/CPS/Files/Open%20Files/ADA_COVID19_Dental_Emergency_DDS.pdf?utm_source=adaorg&utm_medium=covid-resources-lp&utm_content=cv-pm-emerg-def&utm_campaign=covid-19&_ga=2.9076021.1673543319.1585066433-739768608.1576516563

CDC COVID-19 Recommendation on Oral Health

https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/infectioncontrol/statement-COVID.html

CDC Interim Infection Prevention and Control Guidance for Dental Settings During the COVID-19 Response

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/dental-settings.html

OSHA Guidance on Preparing Workplaces

https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3fk_ONMLs58VdUue-mbAX5qP76--V-Ql6xGv-L7nTfycgFgRWfdYv7WAE

Additional Guidance and Resources for Dental Practitioners

ADA COVID-19

https://success.ada.org/en/practice-management/patients/infectious-diseases-2019-novel-coronavirus

ADA Practice Recommendation: Emergencies Only for Three Weeks

https://success.ada.org/en/practice-management/patients/~/link.aspx?_id=6C881EF4A7884989A80BA475F9A116ED&_z=z

ADA What is a Dental Emergency – Patient Flyer

https://www.ada.org/~/media//CPS/Files/COVID/ADA_DentalEmerg_Patient_Flyer.pdf?utm_source=adaorg&utm_medium=covid-resources-lp&utm_content=cv-pm-emerg-def-patients&utm_campaign=covid-19

NC State Board of Dental Examiners: Emergencies Only for Two Weeks

https://www.ncdentalboard.org/PDF/Covid%2019%20Statement%20[mar%202020].pdf

North Carolina Dental Society COVID-19

https://www.ncdental.org/member-center/covid-19-resources