



Guidance for Dental Health Care Settings in Response to COVID-19

March 22, 2020

The New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) continue to closely monitor the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. In response to the outbreak, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's Executive Order 202 declared a state of emergency on March 7, 2020. Infectious disease experts are continuing to learn about the newly emerged virus causing COVID-19, called SARS-CoV-2, including how it spreads. Currently, SARS-CoV-2 is thought to primarily spread person-to-person via respiratory droplets through close contact. Dental providers maintain close contact with patients during a dental procedure, placing them at risk of transmission via droplets from dental procedures.

To mitigate potential risk of transmission, NYSDOH recommends that non-essential or elective dental care be postponed until further notice. Therefore, only urgent dental care should be provided at this time. The [American Dental Association](#) also recommends that dentists postpone elective procedures during the response to COVID-19.

If patients present with urgent dental needs, they should be screened for symptoms and exposure to COVID-19. For patients with symptoms of acute respiratory illness, the patient's care should be coordinated with the patient's primary care physician. If urgent dental care must be provided, standards for infection control and prevention should be in place, including appropriate use of personal protective equipment.

Steps to Minimize Exposure to Patients with Acute Respiratory Illness for Urgent Dental Care

- Establish a COVID-19 Urgent Dental Care Protocol and Policy to address urgent care needs.
- Communicate/send a notice to your patients so that they are aware of your plan to address only urgent care needs during the COVID-19 outbreak to control spread of the infection. Provide updates periodically. Provide contact information for patients to reach you after-hours.
- Screen patients with urgent needs by phone before they come to the dental practice. If symptomatic (e.g. fever, cough, or shortness of breath) or if exposed to a known case of COVID-19, refer them to contact their primary care provider before coming to their appointment. Coordinate care with their primary care physician.
- Place a [sign](#) at entrance of the dental practice informing patients not to enter with symptoms.
 - For walk-in patients, train specific staff to observe patients at check-in to identify symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g. fever, cough, or shortness of breath).

- If symptoms are identified, immediately place a disposable surgical/procedure face mask on the patient and bring immediately to a single patient room, with the door kept closed if possible. Coordinate with patient's primary care physician.
- The CDC recommends that dental healthcare personnel assessing a patient with influenza-like or other respiratory illness should wear disposable surgical facemask, non-sterile gloves, gown, and eye protection (e.g., goggles or face shield) to prevent exposure. Aerosol-generating procedures should be avoided whenever possible, and steps should be taken to avoid or lessen aerosol generation with all procedures. A properly fit-tested N95 respirator or equivalent should be used for aerosol-generating procedures. If not available, then dental providers should use their clinical judgement to determine the best course of action, which might include offering an alternative procedure or providing care in a setting where N95s are available.
- Patients, staff, and dental healthcare workers should perform hand hygiene (e.g., hand washing with non-antimicrobial soap and water, alcohol-based hand rub, or antiseptic handwash) after possible contact with respiratory secretions and contaminated objects/materials.
- Routine cleaning and disinfection protocols for dental equipment should be maintained as recommended by CDC.
- Thorough environmental cleaning and disinfection of the room should be performed after the procedure according to CDC guidance (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control/control-recommendations.html>), using U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) approved disinfectants (http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/materials_minerals_pdf/covid19.pdf).

As this is a rapidly evolving outbreak, providers should regularly visit the NYS Department of Health Coronavirus website for providers:

<https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/information-providers>

Additional COVID-19 Resources:

New York State COVID-19

<https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/home>

CDC Developing Guidance Regarding Responding to COVID-19 in Dental Settings

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

American Dental Association Coronavirus Resources for Dentists

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

Local Health Department Contact Information:

https://www.health.ny.gov/contact/contact_information/