

# DENTAL PATIENT CARE IN THE ERA OF COVID-19

## COVID-19 IS CHANGING HOW DENTAL PROVIDERS ARE TREATING PATIENTS

Read this to learn what steps are being taken to help make you safe at the dental office. After reading this, contact your dental office if you have any questions.

### SAFE DENTAL CARE

Dental offices have a long history of providing safe dental care. They follow rules set by health experts. This is what they will do to keep you safe:

- ✓ They clean all surfaces and equipment after each patient.
- ✓ They replace plastic used to protect surfaces.
- ✓ They sterilize any dental tools used in a patient's mouth.
- ✓ They wear face masks, eye covers and special clothing.

### NEW WAYS TO TREAT PATIENTS

Dental offices have new procedures to prevent spreading COVID-19. Because it is a new virus, scientists are learning more about it every day. Based on what they learn, dental teams may change the way they treat patients over time. Following are some of the new things you may expect at the dental office.

#### BEFORE YOU GO TO THE DENTAL OFFICE

- ✓ Your dental office may call you 1-2 days before your visit. They may ask you if you are sick. They may ask if anyone in your household is sick. They may also ask if you or anyone in your household has been diagnosed with COVID-19.
- ✓ If you or anyone in your household is sick, your dental office may set up a visit for a different time.
- ✓ Patients getting certain treatments may be asked to obtain a COVID-19 test before the visit.
- ✓ You may be asked to not bring anyone with you to your appointment unless they are needed for services like helping to understand a different language, or are the parent or guardian of a child being treated.

#### SIGNS OF COVID-19

Fever or chills (fever = 100.0°F or greater)	Cough
Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing	Fatigue
Muscle or body aches	Headache
New loss of taste or smell	Sore throat
Congestion or runny nose	Nausea or vomiting
Diarrhea	

## AT THE DENTAL OFFICE

- ✓ Your dental office may ask you to call or text before you enter the office. To reduce the time you spend in the office, you may be asked to stay outside until the dentist or dental hygienist is ready to see you. You may get a call or text you when they are ready to see you.
- ✓ You may be required to wear a face covering before entering the building.
- ✓ The office may also ask that you come alone to your visit to limit the number of people on site.
- ✓ Once inside, you may again be asked the same questions that you were asked on the phone. They may take your temperature. If you do not have any signs of being sick, you may either be asked to sit in the waiting area or go directly to the treatment room.
- ✓ You may be asked to wash your hands or use hand sanitizer when you enter the office.
- ✓ The waiting room may not be used or may be set up in a different way. Some offices may have a barrier between the receptionist and patients. The receptionist may wear a mask. Pens and other things used to check in patients and receive payment will be cleaned.



## IN THE TREATMENT ROOM

- ✓ The dental staff may wear special clothing. They may wear a special type of mask. They may wear a full face shield. They may have coverings on their hair and feet. What they wear will depend on the level of risk in your community. It also depends on the type of treatment you receive.
- ✓ There may be equipment in the room to circulate the air. Air filters may be used. Some dental offices may open windows during treatment. The dental chair may be in a different position for better airflow.
- ✓ If your dental office does not have individual rooms for treatment, there may be barriers such as curtains to separate the dental chairs.

## THE WAY TREATMENTS ARE DONE MAY BE DIFFERENT

Health experts have told dental providers to take care in the use of dental equipment that sprays water. The people treating you may do some things differently to reduce the spread of the water spray.

## AFTER YOUR VISIT

You may be asked to contact the dental office if you develop signs or symptoms or are diagnosed with COVID-19 within two (2) days following your dental appointment.

Some parts of dental care have changed because of COVID-19. Your dental office is taking steps to make sure your dental care is safe. Your dental care should protect you and the dental staff from getting sick.

