

Guidance For Your Practice

A Covid-19 task force (the “Task Force”) on dental practice issues was developed as a joint effort by the Office of the Missouri State Dental Director (the “Dental Director”), which is within the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (“DHSS”) and Mo HealthNet Division, and the Missouri Dental Association (“MDA”). The Task Force prepared the guidelines which appear below. Please note that these guidelines, based on the best available evidence to date, are recommendations which are voluntary in nature and should not be considered to be mandatory directives. Each dentist and dental practice should make its own decisions in good faith and in compliance with all existing laws, rules, regulations and other available guidance. The Task Force recommends consultation with legal counsel, liability, and malpractice carriers regarding specific questions involving informed consent, safety or other issues.

The COVID-19 pandemic and efforts developed to curtail its spread have disrupted life as we know it. As we begin to return back to work, Missouri dentists and their supporting teams will continue to possess a high risk for contracting and spreading illnesses, including COVID-19 and future viruses that may disrupt our way of life. While no amount of diligence will completely eliminate risks for infection, dentists can undertake many practical measures to reduce our risk of disease spread.

Rules of OSHA, guidelines of CDC, regulations of DHSS, Missouri Dental Board (“MDB”), and Department of Labor (“DOL”) should continue to be followed as well as any mandates set forth by state and local governments and/or health departments. Many recommendations have come from these entities. Dentists across the state have requested additional guidance, therefore we are offering recommendations as well. To review the local impact of COVID-19 in your area please review the Dept. of Health [COVID-19 Update](#) page [County level data](#).

Dentists who do not feel they are safely able to protect their patients, staff, and other providers should avoid those procedures they are not comfortable performing.

WORKPLACE MEASURES

- Understand [OSHA guidance](#) as it relates to healthcare providers.
- [Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#)

PROTECTIVE MEASURES

- Stay current on your local impact of the COVID-19 outbreak.
 - Dept. of Health [COVID-19 Update](#) page [County level data](#)
- Services should only be provided by appointment when possible.
- If a patient without an appointment arrives, that patient should be evaluated in the same manner as an appointed patient if time and space are available to do so safely.
- Teledentistry applications should be considered in order to mitigate risk of exposure. The following applications of teledentistry may be particularly relevant to the current situation.

- Off-site limited evaluation and triage, including clinical screening and financial arrangements to help limit unnecessary exposure for patients and staff and conserve PPE and other resources.
- Hygienist evaluation and intake of patients prior to dentist interaction a hygienist under general supervision can collect diagnostic data (radiographs, photographs, periodontal charting, digital scans, impressions, tooth charting, detailed notes, etc) for both existing and new patients. This ability can help limit dentist movement between patients until necessary for treatment and conserve PPE.
- [Teledentistry resources](#) and information are available at the MDA website.
- All persons, including but not limited to providers, support staff, patients and visitors who enter the office should be screened according to the latest recommendations for COVID-19 symptoms ([Symptoms of Coronavirus](#)). If feasible, this should be accomplished prior to entering the dental office, either by telephone or other remote communication. Consideration should be given to recommending a mask to patients before entry into the office.
- If a patient, or any accompanying support person, screens positive for any COVID-19 symptoms, they should be instructed to call the [Missouri State Hotline](#), at 1-877-435-8411, or their local or county health authorities for further evaluation and treatment as necessary. Those having fever and/or respiratory illness on phone screening should be scheduled for visit only after they are afebrile, feeling much better, and at least 7 days past since disease onset.
- Social distancing practices will continue to be strongly recommended. This may include limiting the number of non-patients accompanying patients (1 parent or support person per patient). Provider discretion will allow non patients to wait in the waiting room provided proper social distancing can be maintained. Patients may also be encouraged to wait outdoors or in their vehicles.
- Interim guidance from CDC states that if you are performing an aerosolized procedure you must wear at a minimum: gown, gloves, safety glasses/goggles/face shield, and N95 mask (or equivalent).
 - Aerosolization can be expected with use of equipment such as high-speed handpiece, ultrasonic and sonic scalers, and air/water syringes. It may also be expected with procedures that may cause the patient to cough, such as taking intra-oral radiographs.
 - Use of [rubber dams and other means](#) of minimizing aerosolization for treatment should be considered when possible.
 - Ensure proper functioning of the air ventilation system in the office, especially air exchanges per hour.
 - [CDC Dental Settings Guidelines](#)
 - [CDC Infection Control and Standard Precautions](#)
 - [ADA Interim Guidance on Emergency Treatment/ COVID Screening/ PPE Recommendations](#)
- Gowns can be disposable or reusable. All reusable gowns should be laundered after contact with an aerosolized procedure or visible soiling. Disposable PPE attire may still be disposed of in a normal fashion. Previously labeled biohazard items should continue to be disposed of accordingly.
- Providers and staff should review the correct sequence for donning and doffing gowns, masks, respirators, goggles, face shields and gloves.

- [Donning and Doffing PPE](#)
- [How to properly take on and off a disposable respirator](#)
- After each patient, all rooms and equipment should be properly disinfected and sanitized using disinfectants approved for COVID-19 causing virus.
 - [Disinfectants for use against SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19](#)
 - [COVID-19 Sterilizers Disinfectants-Purifiers Guidance](#)
- Common areas of the office should be disinfected and sanitized on a regular basis to minimize risk of community spread of COVID-19.

SUMMARY:

Dental practices will follow guidelines issued by State and local governments and Health Departments OSHA, CDC, DHSS and the MDB to protect the health of their patients and employees.

Efforts should be made to limit exposure to patients, visitors and staff in dental offices. These should include the use of teledentistry and other technology as well as social distancing measures. Screening of patients and staff should be done to limit potential exposure. Proper PPE should be utilized to ensure the safety of patients and staff as much as possible.

May 4 is the date that has been targeted for resuming operations in Missouri. County and local jurisdictions may have different targets or restrictions that require a different date. Each Missouri dentist has a responsibility not only to provide dental services to the community, but also to protect the health and safety of their community, themselves, and their staff. We encourage every Missouri dentist to use the information in this document to help make the best decisions for their particular situation and make adjustments as indicated by changing circumstances.