

COVID-19 Patient Safety Protocols

We have always complied with strict OSHA-mandated protocols to maintain a highly sterile environment within our dental offices. These guidelines were created to safeguard against the spread of severely contagious diseases such as tuberculosis and measles, and they are equally effective in managing the spread of influenza and coronavirus. Below is a summary of the steps currently in place to ensure patient and employee safety:

- 1. Employee Health Screening:** All employees and affiliated providers undergo detailed background and health history screenings before commencing employment. In addition, we strictly enforce sick policies that require employees suffering from communicable illnesses to stay home from work until they have written clearance by a physician to return and have received supervisor approval. Employees who have traveled to a country with a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Level 3 Travel Health Notice are required to self-quarantine for 14 days prior to returning to work. At this time, employees have been strictly required to practice social distancing outside of our treatment rooms; including, maintaining a distance of at least six feet from all persons, and not congregating in restrooms, break rooms or outside of the office. Employees are also having their temperatures monitored twice daily.
- 2. Patient Health Screening:** Due to concerns about patient and employee safety, we ask that non-emergency patients experiencing flu-like symptoms (fever, cough, sore throat, nausea, vomiting and difficulty breathing) and patients who have returned from travel to a country with a CDC Level 3 Travel Health Notice in the past 14 days reschedule their appointments. We also ask that non-emergency patients with known health risks (65+, pregnancy, lung or heart condition, high blood pressure, diabetes and immunocompromised conditions) reschedule their appointments. Patients will be asked to complete a COVID-19 screening interview and temperature check prior to all visits in accordance with CDC and American Dental Association recommended guidelines.
- 3. Sterilization Procedures:** The foundation of our infection control procedures is based on requirements established by the CDC that state that all body fluids are treated as infectious because patients with blood-borne infections can be asymptomatic or unaware that they are infected. This includes body fluids in airborne droplets from coughs or sneezes. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) used in our office, which includes gowns, eye-protective wear with side protection, face shields, masks and gloves are designed to ensure that no blood or body fluids can be passed between staff and patients. These items are washed and disinfected or discarded between patients to mitigate any patient-to-patient transmission. Strict surface sterilization procedures are followed to clean and disinfect all operatory surfaces between patients and, after each use, all dental instruments are cleaned and heat sterilized in steam autoclave machines in individual sterile pouches.
- 4. Common Area Disinfecting:** As a result of the current coronavirus concern, we have taken added precautions in the common areas. All magazines and pamphlets have been removed. Lobby surfaces and patient restrooms are disinfected every 30 minutes. This includes a thorough wipe down of all hard surfaces, such as door handles, door knobs, tables, chairs and front office counters with Cavicide, a CDC-approved commercial sterilization agent. In addition, the area is sprayed with disinfectant, and hand sanitizer is available to all patients in the lobby and back office area. Patients are being advised to practice social distancing in our lobby area or wait in their cars if preferred.

According to the CDC, the most important steps we all can take to avoid infection from airborne diseases are frequent hand washing with soap and water and regular cleansing of highly-used surfaces with disinfectant. We recommend that all our patients take these basic precautions.