

## Frequently Asked Questions and Responses for Patient Safety Calls

**Q: I read an article that said we should postpone non-essential procedures until cases of COVID-19 are in decline. Why is that different from what I've heard from your office?**

**A:** As our patient, your safety and well-being are our top priority. At all times, we follow the most up-to-date guidance and infection control recommendations made by the American Dental Association (ADA), the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

The American Dental Association and the Florida Dental Association have provided guidance that it is safe for dental offices to treat patients as long as they're using the proper protocols and personal protective equipment. For decades, dentists have been using the highest level of protocols to prevent the spread of infection. Since the onset of COVID-19, we have been implementing additional precautions to protect patients, such as [insert examples from your office practices]. To date, there have been no documented cases of COVID-19 being transmitted to or from patients in dental offices. This shows that our actions and our PPE are working.

We will continue following the proven guidelines set forward by the American Dental Association and our state and federal governments to safely and effectively provide treatment.

**Q: I heard that we're not supposed to go to the dentist until the pandemic is over. Is that true?**

**A:** Our office has been open since May and safely treating patients while implementing the highest level of infection control protocols and precautions to protect the safety and well-being of our patients. Since COVID-19 became an important public health issue, we have all learned more about it. This includes participating in training and continuing education, researching techniques, gathering the proper personal protective equipment, making changes to office settings and modifying office procedures.

We also are following guidance from the American Dental Association and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to provide a safe environment for patients and staff. It is safe to go to the dentist. And, it's important for patients to maintain their oral health and not neglect their dental care needs and routine care.

**Q: What are you doing to ensure patients are safe when they come for appointments?**

**A:** There are several science-based steps we're taking to help limit the spread of COVID-19. We're using increased personal protective equipment, have implemented increased cleaning protocols, developed screening questions, changed our office procedures for patient arrivals and much more.

**Q: Is it okay if I want to postpone my dental care?**

A: We want you to be comfortable and come to the office when you are ready, while ensuring that your dental care needs are met and that dental care problems don't form due to postponed routine care. Can you tell us a little more about your concerns?

[Listen and address concerns and respond accordingly – respecting their comfort level while reiterating your safety protocols]

Postponing for months increases the opportunity for small problems to become big ones. Routine appointments allow for checking of several health conditions, which can be caught early. Some conditions, like tooth decay, can be more difficult, painful and expensive to treat if they're left undetected. Your health and safety is, and has always been, our top priority. We are taking every precaution to limit the risk of COVID-19 transmission at your visit.

If your anxiety is preventing you from coming for your upcoming visit, let's go ahead and get something scheduled for the future so that you remain an active patient.

**Q: If I come for my appointment, what should I expect?**

A: When you come for your appointment, you'll notice that we've made some changes. For example, when we call to confirm your appointment, we'll do a brief pre-screening. Also, you'll be encouraged to call and check in from your car when you arrive. You'll see that our waiting room has limited and spaced seating, no shared magazines and no shared refreshment stations. However, there are new hand sanitizer stations.

During your treatment, you may notice that we're using increased amounts of personal protective equipment, including face shields and gowns.

Things you might not necessarily see include the fact that we're screening all staff members with a short list of daily questions and temperature scans. Also, we're leaving more time between patients for social distancing and thorough cleaning of the exam rooms.

**Q: Are you cancelling appointments for patients who are COVID-19 risks?**

A: Yes. The safety of our patients and the dental team is our highest priority. If it is determined that a patient is a high risk or had a temperature on the day of his or her appointment, we may reschedule. Our dentist uses medical judgement as well as guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and the American Dental Association to make the determination.

**Be prepared to answer questions specific to your practice, such as:**

- How many patients and staff are in the office at one time?
- Have you changed your techniques or equipment to reduce aerosols?

- What are you doing to clean your office and exam rooms?
- Are staff members regularly screened for COVID-19?
- Can we use teledentistry or a virtual appointment instead of an in-person appointment?