

March 15, 2020

Considerations for you and your practice amidst COVID-19

ODA encourages all members to take appropriate action to ensure the safety of you, your team and your patients. We know that COVID-19 brings a series of new challenges and uncertainties. This situation is rapidly evolving, and we are committed to keeping you updated. We recommend regularly checking relevant information from the:

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [American Dental Association](#)
- [Oregon Health Authority](#)
- [OSHA](#)
- [Oregon Dental Association](#)

We offer the following for your consideration. Please note that **there are no new mandates governing how health care providers, specifically dentists, should operate in the current environment**, but the ODA believes we need to be a leader in the effort to contain this virus. The American Dental Association is urgently working with the CDC to obtain dental specific guidance.

To do our part in minimizing the spread of this deadly virus, *we encourage you to thoughtfully consider limiting non-urgent procedures while utilizing appropriate personal protective gear.*

What we know

- OSHA indicates that dentists are among the “very high exposure risk” health professional category.¹
- Some patients may present asymptomatic but may indeed carry the virus.¹
- Individuals may not have symptoms of the virus for up to 14 days after exposure.¹
- The virus is most likely spread between individuals in close contact and through inhalation of infected droplets/fluids.¹
- [More information from the CDC on transmission of the virus](#)

Personal Protective Equipment

OSHA recommends using respirator masks when working within 6 feet of patients who may be infected and when performing procedures that generate aerosol:

“Workers, including those who work within 6 feet of patients known to be, or suspected of being, infected with SARS-CoV-2 and those performing aerosol-generating procedures, need to use respirators.”²

We know that dental offices typically do not have these masks, nor are they readily available right now. Individual practitioners should evaluate their individual office risk factors to determine if this recommendation should be implemented.

Mask Shortage

- Ensure you are only ordering supplies for what you need immediately.

- Do not continue to see patients if you do not have adequate supply of PPE.
- If you close your office, ensure you have stopped any pending orders.
- Consider donating what available PPE materials you may have that are not needed in the next few weeks.

On-going Dental Operations and Emergent Patients

- Thoughtfully consider postponing all elective procedures and non-urgent visits. Ask your patients to reschedule appointments if they are symptomatic or have traveled to affected areas.
- *If you choose to close your office for a brief time, please communicate that to ODA. We will be tracking the business and financial impact of this crises to share with state policy makers and advocating for relief resources. Report any closures to [Jen Lewis-Goff](#), ODA Director of Government Affairs.*
- “Avoid or minimize operations that can produce droplets or aerosols. The 4-handed technique is beneficial for controlling infection. The use of saliva ejectors with low or high volume can reduce the production of droplets and aerosols.”³ Additional specific dental recommendations can be found [here](#) and [here](#).
- Talk with your staff about the current outbreak and develop a consistent message that the patient’s well-being in the practice is the entire team’s priority.
- Communicate with your patients. Assure them that their safety is your highest priority and that your office follows CDC recommendations.
- Establish clear protocols for your staff to stay home when unwell.
- Refresh your team on standard infection control procedures and ensure those standards are being followed. [Review CDC Infection Control Precautions](#).
- Ensure you have sufficient inventory of Personal Protection Equipment. [The CDC is monitoring any potential supply issues and offers relevant recommendations here.](#)

We are all in this together. Please contact the ODA team at 503-218-2010 with any questions and continue to monitor our website for additional guidance, and up to date information, from the [CDC](#), [OHA](#) and [ADA](#).



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References:

¹ https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1cDGfTVnw-0QzT0i_K0yFK985gTpLqBIIcftuYmKmFZKAd27SwTMlv4h4

² P. 17 https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1cDGfTVnw-0QzT0i_K0yFK985gTpLqBIIcftuYmKmFZKAd27SwTMlv4h4

³ <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0022034520914246>

