

Information on Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) for the Public

Are dental offices open during the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak?

Dental clinics across Newfoundland and Labrador have been directed to close for regular dental services due to the pandemic related to COVID-19. Emergency services are still being completed (infection, acute pain, bleeding, trauma, etc.).

Is it safe to see my dentist during COVID-19?

Yes, the public health risk associated with COVID-19 is low for Canada. Patient safety is always a top priority for the dental community. Dental offices across Canada follow the strictest infection prevention and control procedures each day. This includes dentists, the dental team and office staff wearing the proper protective equipment during all treatments for patients and when interacting with patients. Dental offices also follow stringent requirements for cleaning, including but are not limited to:

- treatment surfaces which are disinfected between every patient visit;
- floors, doorknobs and transaction equipment at the front desk are disinfected regularly;
- washrooms are cleaned daily and more frequently; and
- hand sanitizer is available for use.

If you feel well and do not show flu-like symptoms, it is safe to visit your dentist. Keeping a healthy mouth is an important part of leading a healthy life. Just like brushing twice a day and flossing daily, keeping your dental appointments is vital to maintaining your dental health and your overall health. If you get a reminder about your upcoming dental appointment, please continue to see your dentist.

I am not feeling that well. What do I do about my dental appointment?

If you are sick, show flu-like symptoms, or may have come in contact with someone who has COVID-19, make sure to stay home and reschedule your appointment. Should any of the following apply to you, please contact your dental office to see about rescheduling your appointment, and contact your local public health authority:

- if you are experiencing mild or severe symptoms of fever, cough, or having difficulty breathing/shortness of breath;
- if you have travelled to any of the areas with the ongoing spread of COVID-19;
- if you live with someone who has been to the areas with the ongoing spread of COVID-19;
- if you have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19 or who is experiencing symptoms similar to the Flu or COVID-19

What can I do to protect myself and others?

The COVID-19 spreads from person to person through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. There are currently no specific treatments for the coronavirus; however, follow these precautions as recommended by the Public Health Agency of Canada and the World Health Organization:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, or into your elbow, not your hands.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- Stay home if you are sick. Most people with the virus do not require any specific treatment.
- Contact your healthcare professional if you exhibit symptoms associated with the virus. Call ahead before going to your doctor.
- If you have been in close contact with a person who has tested positive for the coronavirus, or have recently traveled from an area with ongoing spread of the coronavirus, contact your healthcare professional or local public health authority.

I heard that there is a mask shortage. What is the situation in dental offices?

While dentists are being limited by suppliers on the number of masks they are able to purchase at a time, dentists across Canada continue to see patients while following the proper infection prevention and control standards.

The Canadian Dental Association (CDA) is in frequent contact with Government Officials and industry partners to get the latest developments on the COVID-19 situation and personal protective equipment supplies across Canada and shares new information with Provincial Dental Associations to which dentists are members of.

Where can I get more information about COVID-19?

Please visit the Public Health Agency of Canada's COVID-19 webpage (https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html?utm_campaign=gc-hc-sc-coronavirusoutbreak-1920-0165-9221800776&utm_medium=search&utm_source=google-ads-96470960074&utm_content=text-en-425457848789&utm_term=%2Bcovid%20%2B19%20%2Bcanada) for current insight on the pandemic. The risk of transmission in Canada remains low for the general population at this time, but this could change rapidly. The Public Health Agency of Canada offers helpful information about COVID-19 and many other tips for taking standard precautions to help protect you and your loved ones.

Information on Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) for Practitioners

CDA and NLDA recommend following common steps as outlined below.

- Continue to use standard personal protective equipment (PPE), including gloves, surgical masks (ASTM level 3), eye protection, and gowns. N95 respirator masks are not needed when providing routine oral health care for patients.
- Perform hand hygiene, provide tissues and no-touch receptacles to throw away used tissues, and isolate and offer face masks to patients who are coughing.
- Follow routine cleaning and disinfection strategies in the dental office and enhance when and where possible.
- Identify high touchpoint areas such as the front desk, the waiting room and the washroom. Equip your office staff with the appropriate cleaning products to keep these high touchpoint areas clean, including counters, door handles and transaction pads at the front desk.
- Equip the dental office washroom with disinfecting cleaning products and ensure to clean the area after frequent use.
- Make hand sanitizer available for when individuals enter and exit the dental office.
- For the waiting room, maintain the current recommended social distance and practices, such as:
 - Do not shake hands;
 - Keep a separation of two meters; and
 - Do not keep individuals in the waiting room for longer than 15 minutes.
- Consider placing general flu awareness posters up in high visibility areas, such as the front entrance and at the reception desk.

CDA and NLDA recommends following the below common steps in addition to taking the above-mentioned standard precautions.

- Screening questions should be asked when confirming appointments or when a patient presents for treatment. Patients with flu like symptoms, including cough, fever, congestion or sore throat should be rescheduled. Patients should be screened for a history of recent international travel (within the last two weeks). See the emergency dental appointment protocols.
- If your patients who respond “yes” to these questions and raise concerns with you, please have the patient contact their primary healthcare provider and their local public health authority as soon as possible to determine if they should be seen or tested. Appropriate questions to screen patients for the coronavirus could include:
 - Have you travelled internationally in the last 14 days?
 - Have you been in close contact with another person who has been diagnosed with or under investigation for COVID-19?
 - Do you have a cough, fever or shortness of breath?
- Include temperature readings as part of your routine assessment of the patient prior to performing dental procedures.

- Maintain strict adherence to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when performing dental treatment.
- Use a rubber dam whenever possible to decrease possible exposure to infectious agents.
- Use high speed evacuation for all dental procedures producing an aerosol.
- Autoclave your hand pieces after each patient.
- Have your patient rinse with 1% hydrogen peroxide before each appointment.
- Coronavirus is vulnerable to oxidation; this will reduce the salivary load of oral microbes.
- Clean and disinfect public areas frequently, including door handles, chairs, transaction pads at the reception desk, and washrooms.

Possible transmission routes for COVID-19 in dental clinics

- COVID-19 virus is present in saliva.
- Procedures such as ultrasonic scaling and air polishing create aerosols that may be contaminated with the virus.
- Common transmission routes are direct transmission (inhalation of respiratory droplets produced during coughing or sneezing) and contact transmission (touching surfaces that have been contaminated by droplets or aerosols and then touching one's face).

Client screening procedure

Screen clients prior to their appointments, both when confirming and in-office. [Click here for the checklist provided.](#)

Infection control protocols

- Aerosol reduction:
 - Have clients rinse with antibacterial mouth rinse prior to treatment
 - Use high-volume suction during aerosol-producing procedures
- Personal protective equipment:
 - Safety glasses
 - Gloves
 - Masks: minimum one mask per client
 - Gowns
 - Face shield when performing aerosol-producing tasks

Risk assessment guidelines for mask usage (to address mask shortage):

- **Level 1 mask:** use when minimal fluids, spatter or aerosols are produced, e.g., intraoral exams, taking impressions, taking radiographs, sanitizing the operatory. Can also be used in conjunction with a full-face shield when scaling with an ultrasonic and air polishing
- **Level 2 mask:** use when moderate fluids, spatter or aerosols will be produced, e.g., scaling and root planning with hand instruments. Can also be used in conjunction with a full-face shield when scaling with an ultrasonic and air polishing.

- **Level 3 mask:** use when moderate to heavy fluids, spatter or aerosols will be produced, e.g., ultrasonic scaling and air polishing

For further information from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador please visit:

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/>