

Advice for patients on returning to their dentists

Now that the Government has announced that some of the restrictions placed on society as a result of Covid-19 are being lifted from May 18th, including some of the general restrictions on dental care, the Dental Council would like to advise patients that dentists are resuming practice. Managing the pandemic nationally is an ongoing and ever changing situation and, as Ireland begins to reopen, this progress is dependent on the continuing public health advice that it remains safe for you to leave your house to attend your dentist.

Dentists and their staff will seek to provide a safe and caring environment for their patients and, as a result, you should be aware that your dentist will probably be seeing a reduced number of patients daily. However, we would strongly encourage you to contact your dentist if you need dental treatment.

As the risk of COVID-19 remains, many of the restrictions that were introduced to delay and mitigate the spread of the virus are likely to remain in place for some time and as a result you will see some changes when you attend your dentist. These measures are being put in place to ensure both your safety and the safety of the practice staff. The Dental Council advises that:

- If you have COVID-19 or have symptoms suggestive of COVID-19, you should seek medical advice before you attend your dentist.
- It is important that you contact your dentist in advance and indicate that you would like to make an appointment; the practice will probably not be able to accommodate 'walk-in' appointments. You will be asked some screening questions before you attend; this will allow the practice to identify patients with possible COVID-19 symptoms.
- Your practice will also be scheduling appointments to minimise contact between you, other patients and the staff, and also to allow time for any cleaning and disinfection required between patients.
- You should only attend the surgery at your appointed time. This is to reduce the use of waiting areas and to promote social distancing to the greatest extent possible before

treatment. You may be asked to telephone when you arrive at the practice and you may be asked to wait outside the practice.

- You may be asked to sanitize your hands on arrival and you may be reminded of respiratory hygiene measures and cough etiquette.
- In order to maintain social distancing, practices may advise you to attend your appointment alone unless it is absolutely unavoidable. If it is not possible or practical for you to attend the appointment unaccompanied, you should discuss this in advance with the practice.
- You must co-operate with the above and with any additional measures which the practice staff ask you to follow, as they are being put in place for your safety and for the safety of the practice staff.

Dentists are trained to a very high standard and follow stringent infection control precautions to lower the risk of transmission of infectious diseases. The precautions set out in the Dental Council's Code of Practice regarding Infection Prevention and Control are designed to keep both patients and the dental team safe. We would like to strongly assure the public that the measures dentists are taking are aimed at minimising the infection risks from treatment and making the dental surgery as safe as possible. These measures may include using additional personal protection equipment for certain treatments.

We would also like to remind you that it continues to be important for you to continue to look after your oral health by maintaining a healthy diet and oral hygiene routine.

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