



INFECTION CONTROL

Your dental office¹ has infection control procedures in place to prevent the spread of disease and protect your well-being. Your dentist cares about your safety and works hard to prevent the spread of infection. Before you enter the examining room, all surfaces, such as the dental chair, dental light, drawer handles, and countertops, should be cleaned and disinfected according to [recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#). Offices may cover some equipment with protective covers that are replaced after each patient visit.

Non-disposable dental tools and other items should be cleaned and sterilized between patients. Disposable dental tools and needles should never be reused. Infection control precautions also require all dental staff involved in patient care to use appropriate protective equipment (e.g., gloves, masks, gowns, and eyewear). After each patient visit, disposable gloves and masks should be thrown away. Before seeing the next patient, everyone on the treatment team is required to wash their hands and put on a new pair of gloves.

COVID-19: What to Expect When Your Dentist's Office Reopens

Learning how to stay safe during the COVID-19 pandemic has forced us to do some things differently in our everyday lives. At your next appointment, you may notice that your dental office is doing things differently to keep patients and staff as safe as possible. In addition to the standard infection control procedures they have always followed, dental offices have taken extra steps according to science-based guidelines from the American Dental Association.

Before Your Appointment

Your dental office may screen you before you come in for your appointment by asking questions about your current health. This is to make sure that you are healthy when you enter the office. They may ask these questions again when you arrive for your appointment to make sure nothing has changed.

Be prepared to find a babysitter for younger children at home, as your dental office may request that you do not bring extra people with you. Parents of older children may be asked to wait outside while the child enters the office alone for the appointment.



At Your Appointment

If your state, city or town requires you to wear masks in public places, be sure to wear one to your dental appointment. You should also follow any other rules set for your area, such as social distancing (staying six feet away from non-household members).

To prevent people from getting too close to each other, your dental office may have closed their waiting room. Instead, you may be asked to wait outside until they are ready for you. When it's time to enter, dental staff may take your temperature with a thermal thermometer, take your pulse and oxygen levels with a pulse oximeter, and ask some health questions to make sure you're not showing any signs of illness.

Inside the office, you may notice that hand sanitizer has been placed in various spots for use. Dental staff may wipe down items that you touch, such as pens, clipboards, or furniture. They may have removed extra items from the waiting area such as toys or magazines to prevent people from touching and potentially spreading germs.

Once in the dental chair, some things may look different since your last visit. For example, the dentist may wrap some of the dental equipment (computer keyboard, x-ray tube head, etc.) with plastic bags or wraps called barriers. Barriers should be removed and renewed for each patient to prevent germs from getting in hard-to-clean places. Your dentist may wear different or additional protective equipment including masks, face shields, gowns, and goggles. These extra measures are part of the dental team's comprehensive safety plan.

After Your Appointment

Efforts to reduce the risk of spreading illness to others continues even after your appointment is over. Once you have left, the dental team should carefully clean patient areas using disinfectants that are proven to be effective against many bacteria and viruses, including COVID-19.

If you start feeling ill with COVID-19 symptoms within 14 days of your appointment, call your dental office. If you carried the virus at the time of your appointment, anyone around you during that time could be at risk for getting sick too.²

Anyone can get tested for COVID-19 – even those without symptoms. Immediate testing is highly encouraged for those with symptoms. Testing is also highly encouraged for anyone who was told by a Delaware Contact Tracer that they may have been exposed to, or were a contact of, someone with COVID-19. To find a testing site near you, or to request a home test kit, click [here](#).

For more information, contact the Division of Public Health, Bureau of Oral Health and Dental Services, at 302-744-4554 and www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/hsm/ohphome.html.

24/7 Emergency Contact Number: 1-888-295-5156

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1. American Dental Association. 2020. *Infection Control*. In Mouth Healthy. Retrieved July 17, 2020 from <https://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/i/infection-control>
2. American Dental Association. 2020. *Infection Control*. In Mouth Healthy. Retrieved July 17, 2020 from <https://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/dental-care-concerns/covid-19-what-to-expect-when-your-dentists-office-reopens>
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2020. *Interim Infection Prevention and Control Guidance for Dental Settings During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic*. In Dental Settings. Retrieved October 27 from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/dental-settings.html#section-1>
4. Delaware Division of Public Health, Coronavirus Response. 2020. *Delaware COVID-19 Testing*. Retrieved November 2, 2020 from <https://coronavirus.delaware.gov/testing/>