As dental practices resume operations, ADA offers guidance

By ADA Staff

The safety of patients and the dental team is the American Dental Association’s foremost concern. On March 16, the ADA was one of the first national professional health associations to recommend postponement of all but urgent or emergency procedures. This recommendation was intended to help mitigate the spread of the 2019 Novel Coronavirus, conserve essential personal protective equipment (PPE) for medical frontline colleagues and avoid the need for patients requiring emergency dental treatment to go to overburdened hospital emergency departments.

The ADA’s March 16 recommendation that dentists restrict their practices to all but urgent and emergency care expired on April 30 and was not extended. Oral health is an integral part of overall health. Treatment of dental disease, as well as prevention, is important to help keep people healthy. The longer dental practices remain closed to preventive care and treatment for early forms of dental disease, the more likely patients’ untreated disease will progress, increasing the complexity and cost for treatment down the road.

In April, while the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) continued to develop recommendations for dental health care professionals, dental practices began reopening in states where government mandates began to lift. The ADA recognized dentists across the country needed a science-based guidance and proactively formed a task force to do so.

The ADA’s interim guidance, released in April, builds upon the already strong infection control protocols in place in dental offices and calls for the highest level of PPE available — masks, goggles, gowns, and face shields.

The ADA is offering guidance to dentists and hygienists returning to work, with recommended steps to take before, during and after care. Using different protective equipment, including masks, is one such piece of advice. Illustration/Hana Erel, freenimages.com

Social media campaign helps dentists keep in touch with patients

The Dental Trade Alliance (DTA), in collaboration with Lanmark360, has developed a social media-based campaign that dentists and their staffs can use to stay in contact with patients during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The campaign features five 20-second animated videos, available at www.PostsForMyPatients.com, which convey timely oral health and wellness messages for patients who have not been able to see their dentist because of the quarantine, according to a press release from Lanmark360.

Dentists and their staff who visit the “Posts For My Patients” website can post any or all of the free videos to their own social media channels with just a few clicks. Each video covers a different topic, including brushing, flossing, social distancing, checking in and eating well.

“PostsForMyPatients.com provides an easy-to-use platform for dentists to stay in touch with their patients,” said Gregory Chavez, CEO of the Dental Trade Alliance. “The videos are great reminders about the importance of practicing good oral health during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

“We created this campaign in collaboration with the Dental Trade Alliance to give our member companies a proactive patient engagement tool to share with their dental partners,” said Howard Klein, president of Lanmark360. “After the COVID-19 pandemic, the dental industry is poised to return stronger than ever. In the meantime, these videos can help dental professionals and their staff remind patients they are always there for them.”

Dentists and staff can view each video at www.PostsForMyPatients.com and post them directly to Facebook pages, Twitter feeds and other social media platforms. The site also includes captions for each video, or dentists can write their own.

(Source: Lanmark360)
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Adapting dentistry to an eco-focused world

By Jaclyn Hoexter, BA
(Director, Digital Investment)

As an eco-conscious millennial in the media world and daughter of a periodontist (exposed to more conventions and surgical PowerPoint’s than I’d like to admit), I was delighted to find out that oral care has turned a little bit greener.

While digitalization of surgical techniques and practices has greatly advanced sustainability in recent years, the tools that have been mass produced, such as toothpaste tubes, floss containers, plastic toothbrushes, etc., have not been part of this ecological stride. This has resulted in a mountain of non-recyclable waste over the years.

Earlier this year, I found out that Colgate had come out with the first ever vegan-certified toothpaste in a recyclable tube. In and of itself, this announcement is quite exciting and buzz-worthy; however, it was the final part of the announcement that really got people talking. Despite having dedicated the past five years to coming up with this sustainable solution, the company revealed that it will be sharing the innovative technology with competitors as part of its commitment to reducing the global presence of the most widely used forms of plastic packaging (that until now could not be recycled).

Part of what makes this announcement so exciting is that these types of tubes are not just used for toothpaste but also for skincare and a multitude of other verticals over the years. With a powerhouse like Colgate leading the charge, the oral care industry is poised to transform its industry and beyond.

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and face shield — to help protect patients and the dental team when re-engaging in providing the full range of oral health care.

In addition, the interim guidance includes ways dentists and hygienists can reduce aerosols, such as:

- Hand scaling when cleaning teeth rather than using ultrasonic scaling.
- Use of high-velocity suction whenever possible.
- Use of rubber dental dams whenever possible.

The interim guidance also includes many recommendations covering other patient interactions.

Before dental appointments
- Dental office staff may call patients and ask questions about their current health status. They may repeat these questions when patients arrive to make sure nothing has changed.
- Patients may have their temperature taken prior to any procedure.
- Patients may be asked to bring and wear their own masks upon arrival at the dental office.
- Patients may be asked to limit the number of people they bring to the appointment.

During dental appointments
- Patients may be asked to wait outside until the dental team is ready to see them.
- Inside the office, things that many people often touch, such as toys or magazines, may have been removed.
- The office may have hand sanitizer available for patient use.
- Dental staff may wipe down items patients touch, such as pens, clipboards or furniture.
- The computer keyboard in the dental operatory may have a disposable cover so it can be easily cleaned between patients.
- The dentist and team members may be using different protective equipment, such as different masks, face shields, gowns and goggles.

After dental appointments
- Staff will thoroughly clean the areas where patients have been, using disinfectants that are effective against the virus that causes COVID-19.

The ADA will be releasing a guide and interactive checklist to aid dentists in assessing virus transmission risks in their practices, including factors such as local disease transmission rates, patient-and treatment-specific issues and facility considerations.

Guided by the best-available scientific evidence, the ADA will continue to provide recommendations for the health and safety of patients and dental professionals.

Tell us what you think!
Do you have general comments or criticism you would like to share? Is there a particular topic you would like to see articles about in Dental Tribune? Let us know by sending an email to k.colker@dental-tribune.com. We look forward to hearing from you!