

# Missouri COVID-19 Dental Task Force

## **Guidance For Your Practice**

A COVID-19 task force (the “Task Force”) on dental practice issues was developed as a joint effort by the Office of the Missouri State Dental Director (the “Dental Director”), which is within the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (“DHSS”) and MO HealthNet Division, the Missouri Dental Association (“MDA”) and the Missouri Primary Care Association (“MPCA”). The Task Force prepared the guidelines which appear below for Missouri dental practices. Please note that these guidelines, based on the best available evidence to date, are recommendations which are voluntary in nature and should not be considered to be mandatory directives. Each dentist and dental practice should make its own decisions in good faith and in compliance with all existing laws, rules, regulations and other available guidance. The Task Force recommends consultation with legal counsel, liability, and malpractice carriers regarding specific questions involving informed consent, safety or other issues.

The COVID-19 pandemic and efforts developed to curtail its spread have disrupted life as we know it. As we begin to return back to work, Missouri dentists and their supporting teams will continue to possess, according to OSHA, a high risk for contracting COVID-19. While no amount of diligence will completely eliminate risks for infection, dentists can undertake many practical measures to reduce our risk of disease spread.

Rules of OSHA, guidelines of CDC and regulations of DHSS, the Missouri Dental Board (“MDB”), and the Department of Labor (“DOL”) should continue to be followed as well as any mandates set forth by state and local governments and/or health departments. Many recommendations have come from these entities. Dentists across the state have requested additional guidance, therefore the Task Force is offering recommendations as well. To review the local impact of COVID-19 in your area, please review the **DHSS COVID-19 Update** (<https://health.mo.gov/living/healthcondiseases/communicable/novel-coronavirus/results.php>).

Dentists who do not feel they are able to safely protect their patients, staff, and other providers should avoid those procedures they are not comfortable performing.

## **WORKPLACE MEASURES**

- Understand **OSHA guidance** (<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/>) as it relates to healthcare providers.
- **Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19** (<https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>)

## **PROTECTIVE MEASURES**

- Stay current on your local impact of the COVID-19 outbreak.
  - **DHSS COVID-19 Update** (<https://health.mo.gov/living/healthcondiseases/communicable/novel-coronavirus/results.php>).
- Services should only be provided by appointment when possible.

- If a patient without an appointment arrives, that patient should be evaluated in the same manner as an appointed patient if time and space are available to do so safely.
- Teledentistry applications should be considered in order to mitigate risk of exposure. The following applications of teledentistry may be particularly relevant to the current situation.
  - Off-site limited evaluation and triage, including clinical screening and financial arrangements to help limit unnecessary exposure for patients and staff and to conserve PPE and other resources.
  - Hygienist evaluation and intake of patients prior to dentist interaction. A hygienist under general supervision can collect diagnostic data (radiographs, photographs, periodontal charting, digital scans, impressions, tooth charting, detailed notes, etc.) for both existing and new patients. This ability can help limit dentist movement between patients until necessary for treatment and conserve PPE.
  - **Teledentistry resources** (<https://www.modental.org/member-center/covid#teleresources>) and information are available at the MDA website.
- All persons, including but not limited to providers, support staff, patients and visitors who enter the office should be screened according to the latest recommendations for **COVID-19 symptoms** (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>). If feasible, this should be accomplished prior to entering the dental office, either by telephone or other remote communication. Consideration should be given to recommending a mask to patients before entry into the office.
  - If a patient, or any accompanying support person, screens positive for any COVID-19 symptoms, they should be instructed to call their medical practitioner, the **Missouri State Hotline** (<https://health.mo.gov/living/healthcondiseases/communicable/novel-coronavirus/>), at 1-877- 435-8411, or their local or county health authorities for further evaluation and treatment as necessary. Those indicating fever and/or respiratory illness on phone screening should be scheduled for visit only after they are afebrile, feeling much better, and at least 7 days have passed since disease onset.
- Social distancing practices will continue to be strongly recommended. This may include limiting the number of non-patients accompanying patients (1 parent or support person per patient). Provider discretion will allow non patients to wait in the waiting room, provided proper social distancing can be maintained. Patients may also be encouraged to wait outdoors or in their vehicles.
- If you are performing an aerosolized procedure, you must wear at a minimum: gown, gloves, safety glasses/goggles/face shield and N95 mask (or equivalent).
  - Aerosolization can be expected with use of equipment such as high-speed handpiece, ultrasonic and sonic scalers, and air/water syringes. It may also be expected with procedures that may cause the patient to cough, such as taking intra-oral radiographs. The CDC recommends that ultrasonic scalers should not be used.
  - Use of **rubber dams and other means** ([https://jada.ada.org/article/S0002-8177\(14\)61145-4/fulltext](https://jada.ada.org/article/S0002-8177(14)61145-4/fulltext)) of minimizing aerosolization for treatment should be considered when possible.
  - Ensure proper functioning of the air ventilation system in the office, especially air exchanges per hour.
  - **CDC Dental Settings Guidelines** (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019->

