

24 March, 2020

Interim Guidelines for DHCC Hospitals and Clinics Providing Dental Services

With immediate effect and until further notice, DHCC Hospitals and Clinics and all dentistry professionals in the DHCC Community are required to adhere to the guidelines in this document.

DHCC recognises the unprecedented and extraordinary circumstances dentists and all healthcare professionals face in relation to the growing concerns about COVID-19. In order for dentistry to do its part to mitigate the spread of the pandemic, DHCC has put in place the below guidelines.

- Postpone elective/routine procedures until further notice.
- During this time, concentrate on emergency dental care so you can care for emergency patients and alleviate the burden that dental emergencies would place on hospital emergency departments.
- As healthcare professionals, it is up to dentists to practice due diligence and make well-informed decisions about providing – or not providing – treatment. We do not expect any dental professional to provide treatment unless, in their professional opinion, it is safe to do so for both patients and the dental team. Therefore, we urge all dentists to restrict their practices to dental emergencies and urgent dental care.

Dental emergencies

- Dental emergencies that are potentially life threatening and require immediate treatment that must be referred to a hospital; these emergencies include:
 - Uncontrolled bleeding.
 - Cellulitis or a diffuse soft tissue bacterial infection with intra-oral or extra-oral swellings that associated with severe pain, fever, limited mouth opening, difficulty in swallowing or compromising the patient's airway.
 - Oral and maxillofacial trauma potentially compromising the patient's airways.

Urgent dental care

- Urgent dental conditions are those that require immediate attention to relieve severe pain and/or risk of infection and to alleviate the burden on hospital emergency departments. These should be treated as minimally-invasively as possible.

Urgent dental care includes:

- Severe dental pain from pulpal inflammation.
- Acute pericoronitis or severe third-molar pain.
- Surgical post-operative osteitis, dry socket dressing changes.
- Abscess, or localized bacterial infection resulting in localized pain and swelling.
- Tooth fracture resulting in pain or causing soft tissue trauma.
- Dental trauma with avulsion/luxation.
- Dental treatment required prior to critical medical procedures.
- Final crown/bridge cementation if the temporary restoration is lost, broken or causing gingival irritation.
- Biopsy of abnormal tissue.
- Extensive dental caries or defective restorations causing pain, to be managed with interim restorative techniques when possible.
- Suture removal.
- Denture adjustment on radiation/ oncology patients.
- Denture adjustments or repairs when function significantly impeded.
- Replacing temporary filling on endo access openings in patients experiencing pain.
- Snipping or adjustment of an orthodontic wire or appliances piercing or ulcerating the oral mucosa.

Elective, routine procedures

- Dental facilities must refrain from providing elective/routine/non-emergency/non-urgent procedures which includes but not limited to:
 - Initial or periodic oral examinations and recall visits, including routine radiographs.
 - Routine dental cleaning and preventive therapies.



- Orthodontic procedures other than those to address acute issues (e.g. pain, infection, trauma).
- Extraction of asymptomatic teeth.
- Restorative dentistry including treatment of asymptomatic carious lesions.
- Aesthetic/cosmetic dental procedures.

Recommendations to be followed by all dental facilities and professionals

- Screen patients for international travel, signs or symptoms of respiratory tract infection when you update their medical histories.
- Include temperature readings as part of your routine assessment of the patient prior to performing dental procedures.
- Use a single patient treatment room (where possible) with the door closed.
- Work with an assistant and use four-handed dentistry.
- Consider use of hand instrumentation.
- Use of slow speed turbine without water spray whenever possible.
- Use a rubber dam whenever possible to decrease possible exposure to infectious agents.
- Use high volume evacuation with correct tip placement at the source of the aerosol for all dental procedures producing an aerosol.
- Pre-procedural mouthwashes for 30 seconds supervised.
 - Hydrogen peroxide 1% (dilute 3% to 1%).
 - Chlorhexidine 0.2%.
 - Povidine iodine mouth rinse (0.2%).
 - Listerine essential oil mouth rinse.
- Autoclave your hand pieces after each patient.

PPE

- Make sure the personal protective equipment you are using is appropriate for the procedures performed.
- **Masks**
 - Fluid resistant surgical masks for:

- Non-operative interactions with all patients, including those who are known or suspected to have COVID-19.
- Where an operative intervention is required.
- Where standard precautions are recommended
- N95 masks:
 - Where transmission-based precautions are recommended (aerosol generating procedures).
 - Where N95 masks are being used ensure the mask covers both the nose and mouth and fits snugly against the users face with no gaps between the user's skin and the mask sealing surfaces.
 - Is single use for each patient and is discarded immediately after use.
 - Do not touch once it is on.
 - Change if moist or damaged during care.
 - If reusable 'shields' are used, they need to be cleaned and disinfected between patients.

Note: Regular corrective eyewear is not adequate for aerosol-generating procedures.

- **Gloves**
 - Disposable sterile gloves should be worn at all times.
- **Aprons and gowns**
 - Impervious aprons or gowns (long-sleeve) should be worn to protect uniform or clothes at all times.
 - Aprons and gowns are to be changed between patients.
- **Head and feet**
 - Wear disposable caps and shoe covers.
 - Changed between patients.
- **Equipment**
 - Use single use items where possible
 - Clean and disinfect public areas frequently, including door handles, chairs, and bathrooms.

Ends