

Department of Health Releases Revised Dental Health Care Guidance for Treating Patients During COVID-19 Pandemic

Harrisburg, PA - The Pennsylvania Department of Health today released the [revised dental health care guidance](#) as part of Governor Tom Wolf's strategic, phased COVID-19 reopening plan. Governor Wolf and Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine have revised their business closure orders issued on March 19 to remove the prohibition on non-urgent and non-emergent, dental procedures. [Those orders were issued yesterday](#), May 7.

"We want to make sure that dental practices are operating in a way that protects everyone working in the dental office, patients, and community," Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine. "If a practice does not have the proper personal protective equipment to perform procedures, then they simply cannot operate. However, we also realize that we do not want to create additional public health needs after the pandemic related to dental issues. By taking appropriate precautions, dentists across Pennsylvania can provide necessary public health treatments in a safe and effective way."

Dental providers must follow protocols outlined by the CDC and OSHA for all procedures. If they are unable to follow protocols, then the procedure should not be done. Providers may perform non-aerosolizing, non-urgent and non-emergent care only if proper personal protective equipment, per OSHA guidance, is available for all dental care practitioners, including dental hygienists. Providers should regularly check CDC guidance when providing care as recommendations and guidance could change frequently.

All patients should be screened for symptoms of COVID-19 before arriving at the practice and social distancing should be maintained while in the practice. Patients should wash or sanitize their hands frequently and wear a mask when not undergoing treatment. Tele-dentistry should continue when possible as patients may be able to be treated virtually with antibiotics and pain medication.

Symptoms of COVID-19 can include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Diarrhea
- Chills
- Repeating shaking with chills
- Muscle pain
- Headache
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell

Symptoms may appear in as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure. Reported illnesses have ranged from people with little to no symptoms to people being severely ill and dying.

As of 12:00 a.m., May 8, there were 54,238 positive cases of COVID-19 statewide in 67 counties and 3,616 confirmed deaths. Most of the patients hospitalized are 65 or older, and most

of the deaths have occurred in patients 65 and older. There have been no pediatric deaths to date.

For the latest information for individuals, families, businesses and schools, visit “Responding to COVID-19” on pa.gov.

The Wolf Administration stresses the role Pennsylvanians play in helping to reduce the spread of COVID-19:

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Cover any coughs or sneezes with your elbow, not your hands.
- Clean surfaces frequently.
- Stay home to avoid spreading COVID-19, especially if you are unwell.
- If you must go out for a life-sustaining reason, please wear a mask.