Information for Dental Patients During COVID-19

A healthy mouth is essential to overall health and wellbeing. The Pennsylvania Department of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), American Dental Association (ADA), American Dental Hygienists’ Association (ADHA), and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) have all released guidelines and recommendations to keep both patients and staff safe from the virus. As you make plans to go to your dentist, the PA Coalition for Oral Health (PCOH) wants you to have the latest information on changes you may see.

Prior to your appointment:

● You may receive a letter from your dental provider about their commitment to safety and infection control and informing you of any changes in their process.
● Your dental provider may suggest a phone or video call to learn about your treatment needs prior to scheduling an appointment.
● To allow social distancing between patients, you may have fewer appointment time options.
● You may be asked screening questions when you make your appointment and again when you arrive at the office. These questions may take place in the parking lot outside the building.
● Your dental office may take your temperature when you come into the building, or before entering.
● Many offices will have hand sanitizer available; you may be asked to wear a mask as you enter and exit the treatment area.
● Waiting rooms may no longer have items such as magazines and children’s toys, as they are difficult to clean and disinfect.
● You may be asked to wait in your car until it is time for your appointment and be brought directly into the treatment area without visiting the waiting room.
● Dental treatment for tooth pain and urgent procedures will likely be scheduled first, so it may take longer than usual to get an appointment for non-urgent but still important treatments. Routine cleanings are not recommended at this time.

During your appointment:

● Handshakes or other touching not necessary for treatment should be avoided.
● Only the patient will be allowed in the treatment room except where a parent or caregiver is needed.
● Everyone in the office may be wearing a mask.
● Treatment may be modified to reduce the amount of aerosol (mist) produced. Your dental provider may perform procedures differently than usual, such as using a barrier called a rubber dam around your tooth when the drill is necessary.

After your appointment:

● You may be asked to report any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 within the 14 days following your appointment.

Staff Protection:

● Front desk staff may be wearing masks and/or talking with you through a clear barrier.
● Staff may be wearing equipment such as face shields, cloth or disposable gowns, and foot and head covers.

If you have questions about whether your dental office is safe to visit, please call your dentist.

The list is not intended to be comprehensive, and it is subject to change. Your dentist will clarify their
new protocols to keep both you and their staff safe. They look forward to working with you to help you maintain good oral health!