

As Some States Consider Reopening, ADA Offers PPE Guidance to Dentists

April 18, 2020

The American Dental Association (ADA) recommended on March 16 that dentists restrict their practices to all but urgent and emergency care. This recommendation was later extended until April 30 at the earliest. The intent of the recommendation was to observe social distancing, 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.

As of mid-April, conditions regarding virus transmission vary greatly across the U.S. Some state and local governments are now considering reopening certain businesses considered “essential,” including dental practices, as they phase their communities back into normal operations. The federal government has now released [criteria](#) for states to use in making decisions related to elective health care availability and sheltering in place mandates.

The ADA recognizes that [local or state government decisions](#) regarding closures, including restrictions regarding elective health care, supersede ADA recommendations. In addition, local and state health departments, state dental societies and, in some cases, large urban local dental societies may better understand local disease transmission rates and conditions and make more informed recommendations regarding elective dental care availability.

In states that are considering reopening, the ADA believes dentists should exercise professional judgment and carefully consider the availability of appropriate PPE to minimize risk of virus transmission. The ADA is communicating with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), other federal agencies, and relevant organizations to advocate that dentists, as essential healthcare workers, are prioritized for PPE.

As of April 16, FDA approved tests for COVID-19 are not available to dentists in the U.S. Therefore, dentists should be aware that asymptomatic healthy appearing patients cannot be assumed to be COVID-19 free.

To aid dentists who may be reopening their practices when state mandates are lifted, the ADA has developed [interim guidance](#) on the PPE recommended in order to practice during this pandemic and minimize the risk of virus transmission. Additional guidance documents will be issued regarding protocols for office and treatment procedures.

The longer dental practices remain closed to preventive care and treatment for early forms of dental disease, the more likely that patients' untreated disease will progress, increasing the complexity and cost for treatment down the road.

The safety of patients, dentists and dental team members has been and always will be ADA's utmost concern.

About the ADA

The not-for-profit ADA is the nation's largest dental association, representing 163,000 dentist members. The premier source of oral health information, the ADA has advocated for the public's health and promoted the art and science of dentistry since 1859. The ADA's state-of-the-art research facilities develop and test dental products and materials that have advanced the practice of dentistry and made the patient experience more positive. The ADA Seal of Acceptance long has been a valuable and respected guide to consumer dental care products. The monthly The Journal of the American Dental Association (JADA) is the ADA's flagship publication and the best-read scientific journal in dentistry. For more information about the ADA, visit [ADA.org](https://www.ada.org). For more information on oral health, including prevention, care and treatment of dental disease, visit the ADA's consumer website [MouthHealthy.org](https://www.mouthhealthy.org)
