



DENTAL CARE

REOPENING POLICY

POST COVID-19 REOPENING POLICY

This policy has been created based on multiple updated sources from within the dental and medical professions and government.

It outlines modifications to our normal procedures that we intend to employ to reopen the practice as the COVID-19 pandemic subsides.

It is not known whether these procedures will be temporary or whether they will become a permanent feature of the way dental practices must be run to ensure patient and employee safety in the future.

The worldwide COVID-19 pandemic is still being evaluated and studies and policies and recommendations are likely to change in line with new scientific evidence over time.

We would like to thank all of our patients for their patience and forbearance during the period of temporary closure and for their understanding and cooperation whilst we implement new measures at the practice.

We will of course be providing dental care to all of our patients in the safest possible environment. We greatly appreciate your assistance with any new or modified procedures at the practice.

PROFESSIONAL TIMETABLE

The Gentle Dental team have been busy preparing the practice for reopening and practising our updated procedures before you return to the practice. The practice will re-open to patients on 8th June 2020. Priority will be given to:

- Patients with emergency problems or with other dental problems that require urgent assessment and treatment.
- Patients who were due for routine examinations and hygienist visits during the period of closure.
- Patients with treatment that was not completed prior to lockdown.
- Patients who are due Invisalign reviews.

PATIENT COMMUNICATION BEFORE REOPENING

Starting 1st June 2020 we have been contacting patients to arrange their appointments.

Our treatment coordinator can ensure you receive a more personalised service and assist you with admin duties remotely by telephone, if required.

You will be contacted by our treatment co-ordinator prior to your appointment to update your medical history, dental history and to complete a COVID-19 questionnaire in electronic format. Payment for the scheduled appointment will also be taken remotely prior to your visit.



NEW MEASURES TO REDUCE THE RISK OF COVID-19 TRANSMISSION

Cross infection control protocols have always been a big part of Gentle Dental. Dental clinics have always maintained high standards in cross infection, effectively working against all known pathogens. It is important to state that there is no evidence of COVID-19 transmission occurring in increased rates in dentists or their staff.

COVID-19 is a new pathogen. Whilst there is confidence in current cross infection control, Gentle Dental has introduced further steps to ensure your safety and to reduce risk to the minimum level at the practice.

The team at our practice will comply with the updated procedures to reduce the risk of cross infection in both directions: dental team to patients and patients to the dental team.

Protocols introduced during the COVID-19 will be reviewed regularly and updated as evidence and guidance is updated.



SAFETY

BEFORE ATTENDING THE PRACTICE

Prior to your dental appointment you will be contacted by the practice treatment co-ordinator by telephone or video call. The purpose of this pre consultation will be to

- confirm your reason for attendance.
- complete your dental and medical history.
- assess your relative coronavirus infection risk.
- take payment over the phone.
- confirm your appointment(s).

Your medical history, COVID-19 questionnaire and receipt will be sent to you for electronic signature. Where this is not possible, the forms will be posted to you for signature for you to return when you attend.

You will be contacted again 24 hours before your appointment to check your COVID-19 status has not changed.

If you feel you are at risk of having possibly been infected, even if you are asymptomatic, you will be asked to delay booking any appointments for at least a month. If your signed paperwork is not received and you are not contactable we may need to cancel your appointment. You may be charged for the appointment if we are unable to fill it at short notice as per our normal terms and conditions.

We recommend that patients in the high risk groups for developing complications from coronavirus delay non-essential dental treatment for as long as possible until government advice regarding shielded people is relaxed. If you are in a high risk group and do require treatment we will schedule your appointment at the beginning of the day. Your risk status will be evaluated during your pre consultation with the treatment co-ordinator.

To reduce unnecessary contact at the reception desk, appointments and payments will be made by phone. After your appointment you will receive a call from the treatment co-ordinator if further appointments or your next exam and hygiene have to be scheduled for 6 months.

Whilst travelling to the practice, we would recommend that you limit close contact with other members of the public as far as possible. Where possible, please arrive by car and park in the car park at the front of the clinic. We advise you to come alone, unless you need a chaperone due to medical or consent purposes.

ARRIVING AT THE PRACTICE

When you arrive at the practice please wait in the car and call the practice to inform them of your arrival. If you have come by foot or public transport please phone the practice and await further instruction.

When you enter the building, your temperature will be taken with a no-touch thermometer. If your temperature is above 37.5 degrees Celsius you will be provided with a face mask and asked to return home and self-isolate as per current government guidelines. If your temperature is below 37.5 degrees Celsius, you will be asked to use the hand sanitiser at the door. You will then be asked to wear overshoes and a mask and you will be directed straight into the surgery. Alternatively, you will be asked to take a seat in the waiting room, with social distancing clearly marked, and promptly taken to the surgery, as soon as it is available.

When using the restroom, please do your best to ensure you leave the facilities as you would expect to find them and wash your hands thoroughly. Please inform reception first, as it will be disinfected between patients.

In the event of a cough or sneeze, 'catch it, bin it, sanitise it' stations will be available in communal areas.



DENTAL PROCEDURES

All dental team members will be using personal protective equipment (PPE) in line with current recommendations and evidence. Prior to starting treatment and post-treatment you will be asked to use a hydrogen peroxide mouth rinse.

We apologise in advance for the necessary reduction in social interaction that this will necessitate. Whilst our masks, or hoods, may make us appear impersonal and distant, please be assured we are still the same friendly team underneath it all!

Using the already high standards of treatment care you are accustomed to at Gentle Dental, alongside the additional PPE requirements, you will be treated in a very safe environment, providing excellent dental care with minimal risk.

Following your treatment you will be asked to replace your mask and leave the surgery without going to the reception desk. Your treatment co-ordinator will call you to review your treatment and discuss the need for further appointment on the next day.

For aerosol procedures, once your treatment is completed the treatment room, following current guidelines as of 28th May 2020, will be vacated for 30 to 60 minutes before it can be cleaned and reused for another patient.



PRACTICE PROCEDURES

Here at Gentle Dental we have spent time critically looking at every aspect of the practice with a view to removing all non-essential items that can potentially be a cause of infection.

You will find that the practice may appear quite bare when you attend and we will not be able to provide you with tea and coffee refreshments during this interim period. Please ensure you are fully hydrated and have been to the toilet before your appointment to avoid any interruption to the cross infection measures in place during your appointment.

All clinical and common areas, including doors handles and surfaces, will be covered with sterile barrier tape and regularly disinfected in addition to our normal surface cleaning protocols between patients.

The practice will also be providing buffer periods between patients to allow additional time for decontamination procedures, allow for any treatment overruns and allow preparation time for the next patient so they do not need to wait in the reception area.

Despite the financial impact of the coronavirus, Gentle Dental will not be increasing its normal fees unless absolutely necessary. However, the time taken to carry out treatment sessions may need to be extended which will be included into the fees for your procedures. There may also be a small surcharge for PPE during the early phase of reopening due to a low supply and increase cost of procurement of such items.



SUMMARY

The vast majority of our patients are otherwise healthy without coronavirus infection and we are confident that we are able to provide dental care for these patients in as normal an environment as possible whilst bearing in mind our responsibilities to mitigate risk of infection spread, as far as is practically possible.

The policy will be constantly reviewed and updated as necessary, dictated by circumstances over time.

If you have any questions regarding this policy or about your dental care at Gentle Dental please do not hesitate to contact us

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