

COVID-19 Pandemic and Dental Emergencies

According to World Health Organization (WHO), Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. Most people infected with the COVID-19 virus will experience mild-to-moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. Older people and those with underlying medical problems like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer are more likely to develop serious illness. The COVID-19 virus spreads primarily through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes. At this time, there are no specific vaccines or treatments for COVID-19. However, there are many on-going clinical trials evaluating potential treatments.



Dental clinical practice and procedures are essential component of public healthcare system that contributes to a vital role in combating COVID-19 pandemic by preventing the spread of infection. As COVID-19 remains in the air anywhere from 30 minutes to 3 hours, this could be a risk to both the dental staff and the patient. As oral health is gateway to systemic health, dentist should postpone all the nonessential procedures. In doing so, dentists are then allowed to focus on patients who have dental emergencies during this pandemic. Dental emergencies can occur and exacerbate in a short period and therefore need immediate treatment. The American Dental Association (ADA) has developed a set of guidelines to help patients understand what constitutes a dental emergency and immediate dental attention. Dentists are recommended to close their offices to all routine procedures, which include X-rays and exams, removal of teeth that are not infected, cosmetic dentistry and treatment of cavities that are not painful. According to the ADA, seek dental care only if a patient has any one of the following conditions, as they qualify as dental emergencies:

- Painful swelling in your mouth
- Bleeding in your mouth that does not stop
- Pain in a tooth or jaw bone
- A gum infection that includes swelling or pain
- Dressing change or removal of stitches
- Broken or knocked-out teeth
- Biopsy of abnormal tissue
- Denture adjustment if you are receiving radiation or treatment for cancer
- If cheek or gums hurt from braces wires

The epidemic of COVID-19, originating in Wuhan, China, has become a major public health challenge around the world. The WHO announced that the outbreaks of the novel coronavirus have constituted a public health emergency of international concern. As of April 06, 2020, COVID-19 has been recognized in majority of countries worldwide, with a total of 1,273,794 laboratory-confirmed cases and 69,419 deaths. Infection control processes are essential to avoid the virus from further diffusion and to support control the epidemic condition. Due to close clinical set-up of dental treatment settings, the risk of cross infection can be high between patients and dental practitioners.

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