**San Francisco
Department of Public Health**

Going to the Dentist during COVID-19
Information for Patients

July 10, 2020

Is it safe to see a dentist?

- Dental offices must follow SF Department of Public Health rules that protect patients and staff.

- All staff must check themselves daily before work, and must not come to work if they have tested positive for COVID-19, have symptoms of COVID-19, or have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19.

- All patients and visitors must be asked about symptoms of COVID-19 before visiting the dental office. See "What can I expect when I arrive at the dentist office?"

- Dental offices must space appointments to avoid crowded waiting rooms and long waits.

- Patients must wear facemasks except when getting dental treatment, and must follow social distancing rules in waiting and treatment areas.

- Dentists, hygienists, and assistants must wear facemasks, face shields or goggles, and follow other infection-preventing gear when treating patients.

- Dental offices are required to follow strict guidelines regarding disinfecting equipment, supplies, bathrooms, waiting areas, and any other surfaces you may come into contact with.

What should I do before I see the dentist?

- When making an appointment, tell the dental office the reason for your visit and how urgent it is so they can prepare for your visit. If the appointment is for your child, ask them what your child should expect. Then you can help prepare your child so they are less scared or worried

  - **The dental office might ask you to get tested for COVID-19 before making your appointment. This will depend on the reason for the dental visit.**

- Before visiting the dental office, all patients and visitors will be asked if they have tested positive for COVID-19, have symptoms of COVID-19, or have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19.

  - **If you have a fever that you think is caused by a dental problem, tell the dental office before your appointment. You may be told to get tested to find out if COVID-19 could be causing your fever.**

- If you are asked to be tested, you can make an appointment with your regular doctor. Or, this website https://sf.gov/find-out-how-get-tested-coronavirus can help you find other ways to get tested in San Francisco.

- The dental office may tell you to arrange for someone else to take you home if you need to be sedated. Only one person is allowed to come with you to the office.

What can I expect when I arrive at the dentist office?

- You, and any visitor with you, must wear a facemask during your dental visit, in the waiting area, and the dental exam room. You can only take off your mask during the dental treatment. If you do not have a mask, the office will give you one.

- If there is a line at the reception desk, stand on spots marked on the floor or wall to keep a safe distance from other patients.

- You must keep a safe, six-foot distance, from other patients in the waiting room. Chairs will have space between them.

- There will be a bathroom to wash your hands or hand sanitizer will be available.

- You, and any visitor with you, will be asked if you have any COVID-19 symptoms and your temperature will be taken to check for fever. If you have symptoms, you might be asked to go home and get tested for COVID-19.

- If you have a fever that you think is caused by a dental problem, tell the dental office staff. You might still be able to see the dentist, or the dentist may decide to reschedule the visit for another time. See "What should I do before I see the dentist" above.

- You may be instructed to rinse your mouth with a small cup of hydrogen peroxide and water at the start of your appointment.

What can I expect during my dental treatment?

- The dentist and dental staff will wear face masks, gloves, and face shields or goggles.

- Some dental work causes water and saliva to spray out of a patient's mouth. If there is a chance this will happen, the dentist might perform your dental treatment while using special equipment to lower risk of spreading the virus. Or, the dentist might decide it is best to wait and have you get a COVID-19 test before performing your treatment.

- When finished with your visit, remember to wear your facemask.

What should I do after my visit?

- Follow the directions of your dentist.

- Protect yourself and others from COVID-19 by washing your hands often, wearing a facemask in public, and staying six feet apart from others who don't live with you.

- If you begin having COVID-19 symptoms, get tested.

- If you are tested for COVID-19 within two days of your visit, and test positive (or "COVID-19 detected"), you must tell your dentist office immediately.