

**FAO all NHS dental patients**

Date: 06.08.2021

Dear patient,

### **What you can expect from NHS Dental Services**

Your dental practice is open, however priority is likely to be given to dental problems that are emergency or urgent in nature. The backlog of patients owing to the COVID-19 pandemic and the additional measures required to deliver safe care for patients may result in longer waiting times for routine care. Some practices are able to see patients for routine care but this will vary between practices.

This letter provides further information on the necessary safety measures in place that aim to reduce the risk of COVID-19 in a dental practice.

### **Attending a Dental Practice**

As with all indoor spaces, the number of people who can enter a dental practice at any one time has been reduced throughout the pandemic. This is to allow social distancing and for patients to move throughout the practice with as low a risk as possible. Not all dental practices have the same amount of space so a dental practice in a large building will be able to see more people than a dental practice in a smaller building. This may also mean you are asked to attend close to your appointment time or wait outside the practice until your appointment time. As changes occur following restrictions moving beyond level zero, further updated guidance will be issued.

We would remind patients not to attend for dental treatment if they have COVID or COVID symptoms. However, in the event of a need for urgent care alternative arrangements can be made.

### **Enhanced Cleaning**

Dental practices have always maintained very high standards of cleaning prior to COVID, but there is now an increased need for more frequent cleaning of more areas. This includes all areas that patients can come into contact with such as waiting room chairs, toilets and door handles. This additional cleaning increases the time that staff need between appointments to keep risk for patients as low as possible.

### **Spray, droplets and aerosols**

A lot of dental care requires the use of instruments that create a lot of spray or aerosols and droplets. This means that the dental team need to wear extra levels of protective equipment and masks which take time to put on and take off. Also, if the dentist uses a drill for example then there is a need to leave a room after the treatment to allow the droplets or spray in the air to pass. This increases the time needed between appointments.

## **NHS vs Private Dental Practice**

Most NHS dental practices provide both NHS and private dental care. This means that the practice may have different arrangements for NHS and private patients, and the amount of NHS treatment they provide will vary.

If you are registered with an NHS dental practice then the practice is required to provide care for you in an emergency or if you have an urgent dental problem. You can expect to be seen for emergency or urgent dental care during normal working hours and you should make contact with your dental practice via telephone as early in the day as possible. The dental team will triage your call and make arrangements for assessment and treatment as required. They may re-direct you to NHS 24 during the evening, weekends or public holidays.

If you are not registered with a dental practice and you have an emergency or urgent dental problem then you can call the **NHS Dental Advice Helpline** on **0141 201 4209** for assistance to access care.

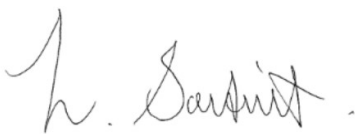
## **Raising Concerns**

If you have concerns about the care you have received or are unclear about your NHS treatment then you should discuss this with your dental practice in the first instance through the practice manager or practice complaint process.

We are sure that everyone in your practice is working extremely hard to look after you and they are feeling the same frustrations as you during these trying times. We are sure you will appreciate that they must follow guidance and put safety at the forefront of their planning.

We know that you will be anxious to get your treatment as quickly as possible, but can we ask that you be patient and understanding about the delays and difficulties in getting you that treatment.

Yours sincerely,



Lee Savarrio  
Chief of Dentistry



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