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COVID-19 ADVISORY FOR NEW JERSEY DENTAL PROFESSIONALS

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The overarching obligation of the New Jersey State Board of Dentistry is to protect the public's health, safety, and welfare. That includes everyone: the people who live and work here, those who pass through, and, of course, the dentists, their patients and their staff.

The emergence of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and its now rapid spread throughout communities in New Jersey and around the world is unprecedented and has raised many questions and concerns by dental practitioners and the public.

The Board has been actively monitoring events and recommendations of federal, state, and public and private entities, and has been working closely with other government agencies to develop the recommendations found here. They are consistent with revised CDC guidelines, which direct that dentists "should prioritize urgent and emergency visits and procedures now and for the coming several weeks." These recommendations are designed to mitigate the spread of COVID-19; protect the public, patients, dental staff, and practitioners; allow for treatment of dental emergencies; and help alleviate the burdens placed on hospital emergency departments where patients with oral pain might otherwise go.

The Board, in accordance with the latest CDC guidance, strongly urges that practitioners comply with the following recommendations. As more information becomes available, these recommendations may change. You are urged to check the Board's website (www.njconsumeraffairs.gov/den) frequently for updates.

- Dentists should cancel or postpone any elective procedure or "routine" service until at least April 20, 2020, to limit exposure to and transmission of the virus and help preserve and extend the supply of personal protective equipment.
- Dentists should provide emergency care to their existing patients and others seeking urgent care.
- Patients must be able to reach their dental provider, who should assess the issue/condition and determine whether there is a need for emergency treatment.
- Dentists should maintain open lines of communication for patients, whether by website, email, text and/or office voice mail, advising of limited operations during the state of emergency.
- Dentists should screen patients for symptoms of illness and/or contacts with possibly infected persons.
- Dentists should evaluate patients' health and assess whether treatment is warranted and safe, and obtain medical consults, as appropriate.

- Dentists should monitor the health of staff and segregate duties and shifts in order to limit exposure to the virus.
- Dentists and staff should stay home if sick or showing symptoms, or if a member of their household is ill.
- Dentists should follow CDC guidelines for infection control, using personal protective equipment, as appropriate. Treatment should be referred to another dental professional, if appropriate PPE is unavailable.
- Dentists providing emergency treatment should employ appropriate precautions to minimize aerosolization.

If a procedure can be delayed for 30 days without, in the clinical judgment of the dentist, running an undue risk of harm to the patient, it is non-essential. Many dentists want a list of procedures that are essential versus non-essential, but such a list might be misleading. We rely on the training and experience of the licensed dentists in this state to determine essential versus non-essential procedures.

Helpful links for practitioners and the public:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – Information for Healthcare Professionals

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/index.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/index.html>

New Jersey State Department of Health

COVID-19: Information for Healthcare Professionals -

https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/covid2019_healthcare.shtml

New Jersey State Department of Labor

Benefits and the Coronavirus – find out which benefits and protections you may be eligible for – <https://www.nj.gov/labor/worker-protections/earnedsick/covid.shtml>

Important information for NJ businesses - <https://www.nj.gov/labor/employer-services/business/covid.shtml>

Additional Resources:

ADA - www.ADA.org/virus

<https://www.ada.org/en/publications/ada-news/2020-archive/march/ada-develops-guidance-on-dental-emergency-nonemergency-care>

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[https://www.njda.org/news-information/coronavirus-\(COVID-19\)-updates](https://www.njda.org/news-information/coronavirus-(COVID-19)-updates)