

Interim Update: Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Recommendations During COVID-19

The United States federal government has issued a national emergency for the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of the conservation strategy for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), the recommendations below are an interim measure while we provide essential and emergent dental care to patients during this emergency. As many of you are aware, there is a global shortage of N-95 masks. When treating patients, the universal precautions guidelines are the gold standard for PPE. Additional recommendations include the following:

Attire:

- For all patients, ensure the universal precautions procedures are in place for clothing being worn during clinical care. Scrubs, as part of PPE, should be worn with a lab coat that covers the full length of sleeves. Lab coats or disposable gowns should be worn over scrubs when conducting direct patient care anytime contact with body fluids is expected to occur during procedures.
- Protective clothing i.e.: scrubs, scrubs jackets, lab coats are not be worn to and from the office. They must be laundered in the office laundry. If laundry at the office is not available, ensure to utilize services for laundering of your scrubs.

Masks:

- For all patients, N-95 masks are the preferred masks to use
- If N-95 masks are not available, please follow universal precaution guidelines
- Due to the global shortage of N-95 masks, and to continue with essential treatment, consider using a Level 1 or 2 mask both over AND under the N-95 masks, which can be changed between patients to extend the N-95 masks' usage throughout the day.
- In addition, protective eyewear is to be worn when conducting direct patient care.

Other useful tips to provide decrease in transmissibility of virus or other microbes:

- Hand hygiene is of utmost importance
- Patient to wash hands prior to sitting in the dental chair
- Patient to rinse with .1% Hydrogen Peroxide for one (1) minute prior to starting clinical care
- Doctor and support team to ensure washing hands prior to and after all care
- Make sure to remove gloves immediately after care and not to touch any surfaces with gloves
- Recommended to apply a rubber dam during all procedures that are applicable to decrease aerosol
- Make sure to utilize high volume suction throughout procedure to decrease aerosol during use of high speed and slow speed handpieces

While this is a change from our normal policy, many dental offices have managed without any PPE above universal precautions.

During these times, as long as we maintain proper hand hygiene practices, this change in process should not increase any risks to any healthcare personnel. Furthermore, the change will allow us to maximize the available equipment to help manage our patients during this time of COVID-19 concern.