

# CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) and DENTISTRY

Dental workers are at high risk of infection with COVID-19 due to the production of airborne material during their work with rotary instruments or air abrasion, air water syringes, ultrasonic scaling and during air polishing procedures. These procedures often create a visible spray that contains large particles, droplets of water, saliva, blood, micro-organisms and other debris. The splatter can travel short distances and then settle onto surfaces, the worker or the patient.



Current advice globally has been to postpone elective procedures, surgeries, and non-urgent dental visits because:

- ▶ it is difficult to identify infected, asymptomatic patients
- ▶ common aerosolizing procedures put practitioners at the highest risk
- ▶ of PPE shortages

## HOW TO PROTECT THE DENTAL PRACTICE FROM COVID-19

### BEFORE THE CONSULTATION:

- ▶ Apply screening to your employees
- ▶ Call all patients before their scheduled appointments
  - ◆ Screen for symptoms of respiratory illness over the phone
  - ◆ If the patient reports signs or symptoms of fever or respiratory illness, advise them to see their medical practitioner or call NICD COVID-19 hotline
- ▶ Defer non-urgent procedures
- ▶ For emergencies- limited clinical staff should be present to decrease exposure.



### IN THE CHAIR

#### Engineering controls:

- ▶ Ensure appropriate patient placement in an airborne infection isolation room (AIIR)
- ▶ High efficiency air filters
- ▶ If unavailable, place the patient in a private room with the door closed will reduce the likelihood of airborne transmission
- ▶ Increase ventilation rates
- ▶ Use surface cleaning devices
- ▶ Consider the use of rubber dams to prevent aerosol generating particles

#### Administrative controls, Training reinforcement and Safe Precautions:

- ▶ Restrict unnecessary people being in the room
- ▶ Strict infection control procedures –
  - Sterilization
  - Surface disinfection
  - Handling sharps
  - Retraining
- ▶ All staff and patients to observe respiratory/ hand hygiene & cough etiquette

### IN THE WAITING ROOM:

- ▶ Limit the number of staff on duty
- ▶ If reception staff is necessary, consider barrier between them and the patients
- ▶ Provide a hand sanitizing station
- ▶ Ensure a functional booking system to prevent walk in patients
- ▶ Minimize time in waiting rooms and encourage distancing of 1-2 m if waiting is necessary
- ▶ Encourage patients to wait in their cars until called in. Limit transport and movement of patients outside of the room
- ▶ Limit the visitors accompanying the patients into the rooms
- ▶ Prioritize cleaning and disinfection of the consultation rooms, ensuring frequent cleaning and disinfection especially of frequently touched surfaces and equipment)
- ▶ Instruct patients to follow Respiratory Hygiene/Cough Etiquette
- ▶ Have signage to indicate these recommendations

