

COVID-19: What to Expect When Your Dentist's Office Reopens



The COVID-19 pandemic has changed a lot of things about our daily lives. Your regular visits to the dentist have changed, too. In March, the ADA recommended that [dentists postpone all but emergency procedures until April 30](#) at the earliest to help reduce the spread of the virus; save masks gloves and other personal protective equipment and help keep patients who need emergency treatment from going to busy hospital emergency rooms.

Now that some states are reopening, dental practices are beginning to see patients for non-emergency appointments. The American Dental Association has developed science-based guidance to dentists on extra steps they can take, [in addition to the infection control procedures they've always followed](#), to help protect their patients and staff. Here's what you can expect at your next appointment.

Before Your Appointment

To help make sure that patients arriving for their appointments are healthy, your dental office may call you before your appointment and ask you some questions about your current health. They may also repeat these questions when you arrive to make sure nothing has changed. Your dentist's office staff may also ask that you limit the number of people you bring to the appointment. That could mean leaving your children at

home or allowing older children to go into the office alone while their parent waits outside during their appointment.

At Your Appointment

If your state or city is requiring people to wear masks in public, be sure to wear one to your appointment. When you arrive at the dental office, you may be asked to wait outside until they're ready for you. This will reduce the number of people in the office and reduce the amount of time you're close to other people. When you enter the office, you may have your temperature taken.

Inside the office, you may notice things people often touch in the waiting room – like toys or magazines – have been removed. They may have hand sanitizer available for you to use and may wipe down items you touch, such as pens, clipboards or furniture.

When you're in the dental chair, you may notice some things look different from the last time you were there. Your dentist may also be using different protective equipment than they've used at previous appointments. This could include different masks, face shields, gowns and goggles. These additional precautions help protect both you and the dentist.

After Your Appointment

After your appointment is over, the staff will thoroughly clean the areas where you've been using disinfectants that are effective against the virus that causes COVID-19 to prepare for the next patient. This helps reduce the risk of illness being passed to others.

If you start feeling ill [with the symptoms of COVID-19](#) within 14 days of your appointment, call the dental office. You may have already been carrying the virus at the time of your appointment, so anyone who came into contact with you during that time could be at risk for getting sick too. Remember, regular dental visits are an essential part of your oral hygiene routine – and are important for your overall health. Be sure to reschedule your dental checkups once your local authorities allow dental practices to reopen. Your ADA dentist will make sure your visit is as safe as possible for everyone involved. Email