May 2020

TwentyOneDental Post-COVID-19
Return to dentistry policy - “the new normal”

This policy has been created based on multiple updated sources from within the dental and medical professions, research of pioneering technologies and materials in creating a pathway which mitigates the risk of cross infection to patients less than 0.1%, government guidance and direct feedback from all our clinic members. It outlines modifications to our normal procedures that we intend to employ once dental clinics can be reopened after the COVID-19 pandemic peak of infection has subsided.

Such enhanced gold standard protocols deliver an incredibly low risk of cross infection to patients and is the way forward for dentistry at this time.

It is not known at this time whether these procedures are temporary or whether they will become a permanent feature of the way dental practices must be run to ensure patient and team safety in the future. The worldwide COVID-19 pandemic is still being evaluated and studied and policies and recommendations are likely to change in line with new scientific evidence over time.

We would like to thank all our patients for their patience and forbearance during this long period of practice closure and for their understanding and cooperation whilst we implement new measures at the clinic.

Provisional timetable

It is our intention to return to work on Friday 26th of June unless an extension to the current lockdown is recommended by the government or professional bodies. The TwentyOneDental team will spend four days preparing the clinic for reopening and practicing updated procedures before patients return to the clinic.

It is envisaged that the clinic will reopen to patient treatments in 4 stages commencing Wednesday 1st of July 2020, current government and professional advice permitting.

The telephone line will remain dedicated to emergencies only until the end of June 2020. For all non-emergency enquiries, you should continue to communicate via hello@twentyonedental.co.uk within this timeframe too.

You may have heard that some dental clinics are intending to open earlier although for us, we are awaiting the official approval for the safety of you and our team. This also follows the issue of dentistry being raised in the House of Lords on 20 May and the concerns over the delay in allowing dental clinics to reopen, the full transcript can be found below:
Patient communication before reopening

We would of course like to continue providing necessary dental care to all our patients in the safest possible environment. We therefore respectfully request your full cooperation with all new or modified procedures at the clinic.

Our Front of House, Katy, Michael & Tara, and our patient coordinator Solange Kennedy, will be contacting patients with ongoing treatment, follow ups and confirming appointments to continue with current courses of treatment from next week. Communication will be by telephone and/or email. It is important to check your emails regularly and keep your phone on.

Due to the large volume of patients to be seen, the allocation of appointments will be prioritised in stages as follows:

- **Priority Stage 1** - Emergency patients
- **Priority Stage 2** - Registered patients with urgent ongoing or delayed courses of treatment excluding aerosol generating procedures
- **Priority Stage 3** - Examinations due prior to and during lockdown
- **Priority Stage 4** - Elective Treatments

As a result of enhanced cross infection measures, the number of patients we will be able to see in a day will be reduced by 50%. With this in mind, patients are contacting us daily to secure appointments for themselves, friends and families. During lockdown, we have also been dealing with a 200% increase in daily emergencies which we have been triaging by telephone and e-consultations. This exceptionally large increase has arisen due to non registered patients not being able to access care with their own dentist during this difficult time or not being registered with a dentist. These patients continue to join us to book appointments.

Appointment choice will therefore be limited. Please do bear this in mind when we are arranging your appointment with you. All patients have been reviewed by us and an appropriate provisional appointment made for you in accordance with the 4 stages we are required to follow as set out above. It is recommended that where possible, the appointment is accepted by you to avoid delays in being seen arising.

Where several treatments arise for a patient and where possible, these will be booked in on the same day.

E-Consultations
Whilst we await for official approval for the clinic to re-open safely, should you wish to discuss any aspect of your treatment or potential treatment, please do book a free e-consultation and arrangements will be made for you to speak with your dental surgeon. Just click the following link:

https://twentyonedental.co.uk/e-consultation/

Please note this is not for emergency enquiries. Our designated clinic number is to be used for emergencies - 01273 202102.

**Medical and Dental Questionnaire (mandatory patient requirement)**

We will require all patients who are attending for treatment to update their standard Medical and Dental Questionnaire (MDQ). New patients will also complete this MDQ. Every patient will receive a link to their email no less than 2 days before their appointment and must complete this. This is a mandatory requirement. Those patients who do not have an email will be the only patients permitted to complete this form upon arrival at the clinic. No exceptions will be permitted should failure to complete this form arise.

**COVID-19 Patient Questionnaire (mandatory patient requirement)**

In addition to all patients updating their MDQ, a newly created COVID19 questionnaire regarding your recent activity will allow us to assess your level of risk for coronavirus infection before you attend the clinic. This form must also be completed by each and every patient no less than 2 days before your appointment. No exceptions will be permitted should failure to complete this form arise.

Please click the following link immediately so you can complete and submit the questionnaire now. It is a mandatory requirement to complete this form.

https://twentyonedental.co.uk/medical-questionnaire/

This will ensure your appointment is not cancelled which may still then include fees being charged.

**New measures at TwentyOneDental to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.**

Our extremely stringent cross-infection control protocols at TwentyOneDental against all previously known pathogens, are already woven into all clinical activity carried out at the clinic. It should be remembered that the dental clinic is already an exceptionally clean environment compared to public areas and it is not possible for us to control sources of infection outside the dental clinic. There have been multiple suggestions from many sources as to how the risk of transmission of COVID-19 can be reduced in a dental clinical
environment. Some of these are straightforward and some of these are patently impractical when carrying out fine and detailed dental procedures. We have collectively evaluated all of these and feel that the following measures will reduce risk to an acceptable level at the clinic. Please be assured that all our team will also be complying with strict daily checks and procedures to reduce the risk of cross infection in both directions.

Dental clinics are far safer than most other facets of daily life outside our homes compared to any other social interaction spaces for example, supermarkets, public transport, pharmacies, GP’s.

This is why:

- an environment that is wiped down thoroughly between patients
- patients screened for symptoms & contacts pre arrival
- repeat patient screening check upon arrival & prior to entering clinic
- patient mask provided upon arrival
- strict hygiene & infection protocols to HTM0105 levels
- temperature taken
- sanitising hands before during & after procedure
- mouth bacteria/viral reducing rinse
- wearing masks, visors, gowns by team
- rubber dam usage during treatment
- air filtration & fogging equipment
- daily checks of all team members & recorded
- strict protocols - “the new normal”

Before attending the clinic

- We will carry out a pre-attendance assessment via your completed COVID19 and Medical Dental questionnaire before your appointment and, if necessary, a follow-up telephone conversation to assess relative coronavirus infection risk.

- Our Front of House Team will contact you to remind you of this where possible, if we have not received your completed questionnaires. We therefore strongly recommend that you complete all forms within the strict timeframe set out above. If we feel that you are at medium to high risk of having possibly been infected, even if you are asymptomatic, we will respectfully request for you to delay booking any appointments with us for at least one month.

- However, we will endeavour to make provision for even higher risk patients to have emergency treatment.

- Positive COVID19 cases will be referred to urgent dental hubs & not attend clinic
• We would recommend that patients in high-risk and extremely high-risk groups delay non-essential dental treatment for as long as possible until the trend of the pandemic becomes clear. To find out whether you are in a high or very high-risk group please see the following link - [https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/)

• **In view of the potential seriousness of this disease, please note that we respectfully insist that both your Medical and Dental Questionnaire (MDQ) and COVID19 Questionnaire (C19Q) are completed as instructed, before your appointment. You will be sent a link by us for your MDQ Questionnaire and tracked on each patients file. The C19Q Questionnaire must be completed no less than 2 days before your scheduled appointment although we recommend this is completed now. If we do not receive the completed questionnaires in time and we are unable to contact you for assessment of your current condition, we will have no choice but to cancel your appointment and inform you by email/text. You may be charged for the appointment if we are unable to fill it at short notice as per our normal terms and conditions**

• We already operate a payment-in-advance policy for treatment phases and this will be enhanced for all other bookings being made. Prior to you attending your appointment we will request payment via card over the telephone by our front of house team. Advance payment will be requested when your appointment is booked and should be completed before attendance. For all follow ups advised by your dental surgeon or hygienist, after treatment has been undertaken whilst at the clinic, appointments will be made before you leave, and card only payment taken. Cash is not permitted during this period. This ensures each patient treatment is not delayed and due to the limited appointment availability, an appointment is secured.

• When travelling to the clinic, we would recommend that you always adhere to government instructions. If you can drive or be driven and picked up by somebody with whom you live, this would be ideal. Our private car parking facility and cycle area is in high demand already. Please bear this in mind and subject to availability, we will reserve a space for you. Please request this at the time of booking. Cycles must be placed in the dedicated cycle area at the rear of the clinic and must use the side delivery entrance for this purpose only. **Until further notice, no access is permitted via the clinic rear door either. A one way system is now in place. Therefore, all patients must enter via the main entrance on New Church Road and follow instructions. Those using the car park or cycle area will also have clear one way signs and guidance to follow and must be adhered to at all times.**

• Alternatively, we would recommend coming to the clinic in a taxi. Please book your taxi in advance as there may be a shortage as businesses start to reopen.

• Please carry hand sanitiser with you if possible, use regularly and avoid touching your face. Please wash your hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds at every opportunity.
Arriving at the clinic

• Appointments will be staggered with a strict protocol in place for everyone to follow.

• You will see signage with clear instructions upon your arrival at the main entrance. It is necessary that you follow each stage, listen carefully, and follow all instructions given to you whilst at the clinic. Failure to do so, will result in your appointment being cancelled, although still chargeable and you will be requested to leave.

• When you attend the clinic (but before you enter), you will be required to ring the doorbell, sanitise your hands and then stand back behind the external black door mat. Signage and markers will be in place for guidance. Front of House will welcome you, ask you to re-confirm that the safety questions provided have not changed and then digitally take your temperature. (If your temperature is above regulations, you will not be permitted to enter the clinic and will be asked to return home and self-isolate as per current government guidelines.) You will then be provided with a face mask to wear throughout your visit and is not to be removed until you are instructed to do so once you are in the treatment suite. If you have or are wearing your own face mask, this is acceptable. However, it must remain on at all times unless instructed otherwise.

• If you are well, you will be directed to the patient lounge or straight to the treatment suite and where you will be required to undertake the following before commencing your appointment:
  
  • Use the antiseptic hand wash provided in the patient lounge and/or prior to entering the treatment suite, utilise the sanitiser at the treatment door
  
  • Carry out a 30 second medical mouthwash and gargle. We will provide this in disposable cups and discarded. This has been shown to rapidly kill the virus and reduce any viral load even if you are asymptomatically infected. Our clinical team will be carrying out the same process at each session.

• We regret that during this interim period, we will not be providing our normal refreshment services in the interests of reducing all opportunities for cross infection to a minimum.

• When using the restrooms, please do your best to ensure that you leave the facilities as you would expect to find them. The restrooms will be regularly disinfected, and we would respectfully ask that you make our team’s task easier by being considerate.

• Government safety guidelines have been implemented, including safety screens, a one way system with appropriate signage and feet marking for the additional safety of every-
We would respectfully request social distancing measures are observed and instructions are followed at all times.

- The TwentyOneDental team will have spent time critically looking at every aspect of the clinic with a view to removing all non-essential items in the open to reduce the number of objects that may act as fomites (surfaces on which microorganisms may reside and can potentially be the cause of cross infection). You will find that the treatment suites may appear quite bare when you attend.

- All clinical and common areas including door handles and surfaces will be regularly disinfected at set times using hypochlorous acid solution (electrically activated water) which is potently viricidal against coronavirus and other microorganisms and can be used safely on all work surfaces and indeed within dental water lines and for operative procedures.

- TwentyOneDental has been using hypochlorous acid solution (Sterilox) for many years in its dental chairs and will increase production for additional use as a surface disinfectant in addition to our normal surface cleaning protocols between patients.

- TwentyOneDental will be providing an additional 30-minute buffer period between patients to allow additional time for decontamination procedures, allow for any treatment overruns and allow preparation time for the next patient so that they can be seen as soon as is practicable.

- Appointments will be made and confirmed by email, SMS or telephone with follow ups being made at Concierge.

## Dental procedures

All clinical team members will be upgrading their personal protective equipment in line with current recommendations and evidence including FFP2 and FFP3 masks, visors and protective clothing as appropriate. We apologise in advance for the necessary reduction in social interaction that this will necessitate. Whilst our garb may make us appear impersonal and distant, please be assured we are still the same friendly team underneath it all!

We are especially mindful that most dental treatments are aerosol-generating procedures (AGP’s). It is almost impossible for us to carry out meaningful dental procedures without generation of some level of aerosol.

The dental industry have a range of processes available to deal with this problem and, by adapting a layered approach to risk management as we have, 99.9% of the potentially hazardous materials can be safely removed.

Aerosol suspended in the air is a potential source of infection which we wish to keep to a minimum. Currently the dental literature suggests our use of our normal high-volume suction reduces aerosol production by over 90%.
The use of dental rubber dam which is also routine in the clinic further reduces bio aerosols by up to 90%.

Our regular facemasks filter approximately 60% of remaining airborne particles. FFP2 and FFP3 masks filter 94% and 99% respectively of airborne particles in both directions (patient to clinician and clinician to patient).

We therefore feel that our normal dental procedures can be carried out with minimal risk with use of high-volume suction, dental dam and FFP2 masks and, in high aerosol generating procedures such as hygienist visit for periodontal treatment, FFP3 masks as appropriate.

Whilst not a requirement, we have arranged the procurement of viricidal air filtration and purification systems to further reduce aerosol risk.

Dental professionals have historically provided exceptional levels of care and expertise in implementing scientific research and government advice. Simply put, implementing infection control protocols for the safety and welfare of patients and staff is common place in dentistry. Indeed as dental professionals we regularly prevent the routine methods of transmission that COVID19 presents.

Due to the impact of the coronavirus/PPE, dental clinics are now having to increase fees. TwentyOneDental have kept their fees to a minimum. Unfortunately, due to the enhanced cross infection measures that we will have to adopt, there will naturally be a reduction in the number of procedures that we are able to carry out. Our daily patient appointments that can be offered will reduce by 50%, but we have avoided increasing our fees to this level.

Our younger patients

We understand how seeing us in PPE may be a little troubling for some of our younger patients. That’s why we ask all parents to let all the kids know that its “dress up day”, so they know they are going to see us looking a little bit different when they arrive. But don’t worry, with the support of the parents we will make sure its fun for them!

Summary

At the time of writing PUBLIC HEALTH ENGLAND has confirmed that as of today, Thursday 21st of May 2020, there have been 409 officially recorded coronavirus cases in Brighton and Hove out of the local population of over 606,909

https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk
This means that the vast majority of our patients are otherwise healthy without coronavirus infection and we would like to be able to provide normal dental care for these patients in as normal an environment as possible, while bearing in mind our responsibilities to mitigate risks of infection spread as far as is practically possible.

During the past weeks since the COVID-19 lockdown, the number of dental appointments and treatments missed is staggering. Extrapolating the figures from NHS England alone, it is estimated that around 1.3 million adult appointments, including 4.5 million course of treatment as well as 808,000 child appointments have so far been missed. Significantly more, if you add in numbers from the other parts of the UK.

As well as regular check-ups and treating pain, dentists also undertake the vital work of mouth cancer screening. Head and neck cancers are the 8th most common cancer in the UK with incidence, increasing over the past decade by a third. In a typical six week period, nearly 1,000 cases are diagnosed. Up to 88% of this type of cancer is preventable with dentists highly trained to identify susceptible patients and give preventative advice. Caught early, this is a treatable cancer. Caught late, it has a very poor prognosis.

What other conditions can be linked to oral health?

Your oral health might contribute to various diseases and conditions, including:

- **Endocarditis**

  This infection of the inner lining of your heart chambers or valves (endocardium) typically occurs when bacteria or other germs from another part of your body, such as your mouth, spread through your bloodstream and attach to certain areas in your heart.

- **Cardiovascular disease**

  Although the connection is not fully understood, some research suggests that heart disease, clogged arteries and stroke might be linked to the inflammation and infections that oral bacteria can cause.

- **Pregnancy and birth complications**

  Periodontitis has been linked to premature birth and low birth weight.

- **Pneumonia**

  Certain bacteria in your mouth can be pulled into your lungs, causing pneumonia and other respiratory diseases.

Certain conditions also might affect your oral health, including:
• Diabetes

By reducing the body's resistance to infection, diabetes puts your gums at risk. Gum disease appears to be more frequent and severe among people who have diabetes.

Research shows that people who have gum disease have a harder time controlling their blood sugar levels. Regular periodontal care can improve diabetes control.

• HIV/AIDS

Oral problems, such as painful mucosal lesions, are common in people who have HIV/AIDS.

• Osteoporosis

This bone-weakening disease is linked with periodontal bone loss and tooth loss. Certain drugs used to treat osteoporosis carry a small risk of damage to the bones of the jaw.

• Alzheimer's disease

Worsening oral health is seen as Alzheimer's disease progresses.

Other conditions that might be linked to oral health include eating disorders, rheumatoid arthritis, certain cancers and an immune system disorder that causes dry mouth (Sjogren's syndrome).

Dentistry is a key health profession closely involved in maintaining both oral and systematic health. The public sees a dentist far more frequently than their GP, and dentists are trained to recognise the signs and symptoms of many common diseases as well of course as identifying and dealing with many common dental problems. During the current crisis, the absence of dental examinations and care is resulting in a backlog of untreated diseases which will only have a negative effect upon patients health and financially too.

It is therefore imperative that patient appointments are made so their oral health and treatment can be reviewed and any issues identified, caught quickly avoiding a negative impact on their health and additional costs in treatment.

This policy will be constantly reviewed and updated as necessitated by circumstances over time.

Have you remembered to:

(1) Complete the COVID19 mandatory questionnaire? If not, click the following link and complete now - https://twentyonedental.co.uk/medical-questionnaire/

(2) Keep a check on your emails for your Medical & Dental Questionnaire (MDQ) link which
we will send to you. This must also be updated no less than 2 days before your appointment and submitted to us.

In the event you have any difficulty in completing the above forms, you must immediately email us at hello@twentyonedental.co.uk or from 1 July you should telephone us on 01273 202102. Our Front of House will then be happy to assist you and will ensure your appointment is not cancelled.

If you have any questions regarding this policy or about your dental care at TwentyOneDental, please do not hesitate to contact us at hello@twentyonedental.co.uk

Yours sincerely

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