

Ensuring Patient Safety in Dentistry

The dental profession has taken great effort and pride in patient safety measures implemented since COVID-19. Dentists have accepted the challenges of the new normal to ensure that they deliver safe dental care.

Below are a few suggestions to develop a culture within your team that is focused on promoting safe, patient-centered care:

- Time out – verify that you have the correct patient record, correct patient, correct procedure and correct site prior to initiating treatment.
- Ensure accuracy of patient identification with the use of at least two patient identifiers, such as name and date of birth, when providing care, treatment, or services.
- Maintain an accurate and complete patient chart that can be interpreted by a knowledgeable third party. Standardizing abbreviations, acronyms, and symbols throughout the record is recommended.
- Ensure an accurate, comprehensive, and up-to-date medical/ dental history including medications and allergy list is included in the chart to ensure patient safety during each visit. Ongoing communication with health care providers, both medical and dental, who manage patient's health helps ensure comprehensive, coordinated care of each patient.
- Utilize barriers to prevent ingestion or inhalation of dental materials or small instruments. Provide the patient with eye protection during dental procedures.
- Conduct routine inspections of physical facility in regards to patient safety. This includes development and periodic review of office emergency and fire safety protocols and routine inspection and maintenance of clinical equipment. Have a written protocol for medical emergencies. Train all staff and assign roles.
- Professional continuing education by all licensed dental professionals to maintain familiarity with current regulations, technology, and clinical practices.
- Compliance with and recognition of the importance of infection control policies, procedures, and practices in dental health care settings in order to prevent disease transmission from patient to care provider, from care provider to patient, and from patient to patient.
- Review and implement sterilization and disinfection processes as per the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Minnesota Board of Dentistry guidelines. Verify that the instruments have been sterilized and the packaging is not compromised prior to use.

Additional Resources:

<https://www.ada.org/publications/ada-news/viewpoint/my-view/2020/november/improving-safety-in-dentistry>

https://www.aapd.org/media/Policies_Guidelines/P_PatientSafety.pdf

<https://psnet.ahrq.gov/perspective/safety-dentistry>

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2050168420980990>