Arkansas Department of Health

4815 West Markham Street • Little Rock, Arkansas 72205-3867 • Telephone (501) 661-2000
Governor Asa Hutchinson
Nathaniel Smith, MD, MPH, Secretary of Health

May 11, 2020

Directive on Resuming Elective Dental Services

The Secretary of Health, in consultation with the Governor, has sole authority over all instances of quarantine, isolation, and restrictions on commerce and travel throughout Arkansas, as necessary and appropriate to control disease in the state of Arkansas as authorized by Ark. Code Ann. §20-7-109—110 and the Board of Health's Rules Pertaining to Reportable Disease (2019). Based on available scientific evidence, it is necessary and appropriate to take further action to ensure that COVID-19 remains controlled and that residents and visitors in Arkansas remain safe.

On March 23, 2020 Dr. Nate Smith, Secretary of Health, in consultation with Governor Asa Hutchinson, issued a directive that elective dentistry in the state would cease. Based on a projected decrease in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations, dental facilities and dental health care providers (DHCP) may resume elective dental services on May 11, 2020 when they meet the following requirements. Since dental work often creates aerosols, it carries an added risk of spreading COVID-19, especially to the DHCP, who can spread it to others.

a. Follow the screening guidelines for patients and dental team as outlined in the ADH Guidelines
b. The proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is made available to all staff members and disinfectant protocols have been updated to reflect issues related to the SAR-CoV-2 Coronavirus (COVID-19).
c. Phase I should begin with a reduced volume of patients scheduled to maintain appropriate social distancing, minimize congregation at the business desk for check-in/check-out patients;
d. All providers must eliminate traditional reception/common rooms seating areas and implement non-traditional alternatives (call ahead registration, wait in car until called, etc.). Remove all magazines, TV remotes, toys, etc. that may typically be handled by patients; social distancing requirements are to be maintained in all settings where people must wait in order to minimize direct personal contact between individuals within the facility;
e. All providers must plan for and ensure enhanced workplace sanitizing and disinfecting;
f. All patients and dental team members should wear appropriate face mask coverings while within the facility;
g. Using professional judgement, the focus of treatment should be on treating active decay, periodontitis and prevention services;
h. Patients should use a preprocedural mouth rinse of 1% hydrogen peroxide or 0.2% provodine to reduce the oral microflora;

i. In high aerosol risk treatment areas, all providers must wear appropriate PPE and strictly adhere to aerosol mitigation and controls as outlined in the ADH Guidelines;
j. **Ultrasonic/piezo/sonic instrumentation is not to be used at this time**. Limit dental hygiene procedures to hand instrumentation and slow speed hand piece for coronal polishing;
k. Allot longer appointment times to allow proper disinfecting protocols to be completed. Follow the recommended time (product label) for the disinfectants to remain on surfaces in order to be effective.
l. Implement protocols to minimize exposures after procedures:
    a. Ask patients to wash their hands for 20 seconds and to wear the provided surgical mask when they leave the treatment area.
    b. When possible, provide all necessary information to patients in the procedure room to avoid congregation at the front desk/waiting area on their way to exit the clinic.
    c. Complete paperwork electronically before or after the appointment if possible.
m. Transitioning to subsequent phases will be determined by the course and decline of impact related to COVID-19 cases in Arkansas; information will be disseminated through the ADH website, the Arkansas State Board of Dental Examiners and the associations representing the dentists and dental hygienists;
n. Each dental facility must have an ample supply of PPE (including N95 respirator mask or comparable alternative) for resuming elective dental treatment while maintaining a reserve should there be a resurgence of the virus.

**** This Directive is subject to change as the COVID-19 pandemic progresses ****