COVID-19 guidelines for dental services

Key principles

This guideline provides additional advice to dental services during the COVID-19 pandemic/ endemic phases.

Definitions

Aerosol Generating Procedures (AGPs) in dentistry include procedures that use any of the following devices: high speed hand pieces, surgical hand pieces, ultrasonic and sonic devices, air polishing devices, and lasers. Triplex where air and water are used together can be considered aerosol generating.

Screening for COVID-19

All patients, visitors, are to be screened upon arrival at the clinic. The current NSW Health guide to healthcare visitation can be found at https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Pages/screening-procedure-nsw-health-facilities.aspx. At minimum the following screening questions for visitors should be used:

1. Have you tested positive to COVID-19 within the last 10 days?
2. Have you tested positive to another acute respiratory infection in the last 7 days?
3. Do you have any symptoms of COVID-19 or other acute respiratory infection?
4. Have you been identified as a high-risk contact of someone who has had COVID-19 in the previous 7 days?
5. Have you returned from overseas in the past 7 days?

If the visitor has answered “yes” to any of the above questions, then consider a risk management approach. Please consult the NSW Health guidelines on managing COVID-19 for further information.

Risk management approach

1. Dental services should consult the Response and Escalation Framework and the Risk Monitoring Dashboard.
2. A risk assessment management approach should consider the degree of community transmission, the vaccination rates of the population and the nature of the procedure proposed including whether it is an AGP.
3. This risk assessment may determine whether non-urgent treatment is delayed, the personal protective equipment (PPE) used and the environmental setting under which the proposed treatment is undertaken.

Deferring dental treatment

In most cases dental treatment for a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case should be deferred until the patient is deemed non-infectious. Vaccination status should not be used as the sole reason for deferring care.

Managing shared open clinics

The following measures should be considered when managing and risk assessing the use of shared open clinics:

1. Two (2) metres is the minimum distance between the headrests of the patient chairs. Three (3) metres or more may be appropriate depending on the procedure and physical space available.
2. The use of physical barriers such as screens or partitions between chairs may assist in separating spaces.
3. Risk assess the air quality, existing ventilation, and air exchange of the shared space. Consider adjusting or enhancing existing ventilation before using other air improving devices.
4. Consider the use of clinical zones based on procedural risk (e.g., AGP) or vulnerable patient cohorts (unvaccinated or immune suppressed). Adjustment to patient flow, patient timing, and grouping of procedure types may assist risk management of shared spaces.
5. Minimise the number of carers/family each patient can bring to the clinical area
6. Minimise and manage the staff flow through a shared clinical space.
7. Provide surgical mask to patients, carers/family, and appropriate PPE to staff including clinical tutors walking into the shared space.
8. Minimise aerosols by practicing four handed dentistry, use of highspeed suction and rubber dam.
## COVID-19 guidelines for dental services

### Dental services - COVID-19 quick reference guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COVID-19</th>
<th>Hand hygiene</th>
<th>Disposable gloves</th>
<th>Fluid Resistant gown or apron*</th>
<th>Surgical mask</th>
<th>P2/N95 mask</th>
<th>Eye protection safety glasses~</th>
<th>Face Shield~ or Mask with visor</th>
<th>Treatment room requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GREEN alert*</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>*Risk assessment</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>*Risk assessment</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>*Risk assessment</td>
<td>Standard precautions apply at all times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMBER or YELLOW alert level*</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>*Risk assessment</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>*Risk assessment</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>*Risk assessment</td>
<td>A single room or risk assessed shared open space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RED alert level*</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>A single room or risk assessed shared open space</td>
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<tr>
<td>Confirmed or suspect patient</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
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<td>Use a single room with the door closed. Where available use negative air flow and good ventilation. High risk AGPs should be performed in a negative pressure room or equivalent. Allow necessary air changes before next patient.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Risk assessment for AGPs should consider the length of procedure and anticipated exposure to large volumes of blood/body fluids and respiratory droplets AND prevalence of community transmission.

~Eye protection-when within 1.5m of a person suspected or confirmed with COVID, or when blood or body substance splash is anticipated.

*Gowns, aprons and P2/N95 should be disposed of when visibly contaminated or when doffing.