Utah Dental Association

Many of you have been aware of the extensive efforts made by the Utah Dental Association leadership to work with state and national leaders toward resuming the ability to take care of patient needs beyond emergency treatments only. It is with great pleasure that we share Governor Herbert’s Public Health Order of Tuesday, April 21st, allowing hospitals and physicians (including dentists) to resume some elective surgeries. The Utah Dental Association has worked hard to help shape statewide parameters that will minimize the risks to patients and the dental team, in regards to coronavirus exposure. We are grateful Governor Herbert publicly recognized our efforts when specifically mentioning the Utah Dental Association and other key groups, in today’s Public Health Order statement.

This Public Health Order does not mean Utah has moved out of the red high-risk aspect of this pandemic. We are not sure when the state of Utah will move to the orange moderate risk phase. We need to remember as Governor Herbert stated, “While we are not out of the woods yet, we also understand that many of the procedures that have been postponed are medically necessary. At this time, we believe we can cautiously resume certain procedures”

As the UDA has stated numerous times, risks are always present in a dental or medical setting. Knowing when to avoid certain high-risk situations and minimizing any other risk relies on sound professional judgement. This is a key aspect in resuming some elective procedures. The following list are the precautions identified in conjunction with the Public Health Order:

Practices reopened with additional precautions taken by healthcare providers (including Dentistry), based on availability of resources

- Consider availability of resources (access to PPE, supplies, equipment, medicine)
- Patients encouraged to wear masks when they go to their healthcare provider
- Ensure 6-foot physical distance of all patients at all times
- No congregating in waiting rooms; if possible, patients should wait outside or in their car and be escorted directly to a treatment room with minimal social interaction
- All children’s play areas, toys, magazines, and similar items removed from waiting rooms
- Screen patients upon entering the office with a questionnaire asking about symptoms, travel, and any sicknesses in the home
- Take patient temperature to screen for fever
- Only one adult may accompany each child; strongly encourage to wait outside the exam room if aerosols will be generated during treatment
- Plexiglass barrier installed, face shields, or masks appropriate to setting provided to front desk personnel
- Appropriate PPE should be worn when taking care of non-COVID-19 patients
• Appropriate protocols, by setting, should be put in place for using appropriate PPE for PUI, screened positive, and COVID-19 patients
• Personal clothing should be changed when leaving care setting based on risk posed by patient care being provided
• Gowns or shoe coverings are not necessary, but would provide added protection
• Face shields or goggles that seal around the eyes must be worn when performing any treatment that creates an aerosol
• Maintain appointment log with patient contact information to assist with contact tracing efforts (EMR system is sufficient)

All universal precautions strictly maintained

This Public Health Order (see attachments) does not resume business as usual. The UDA mentioned in our previous message to dental team members, that the dental office may need to go through several management concerns considering physical office changes, addressing staff concerns and obtaining PPE. It will be wise to make significant efforts to satisfy patients concerns, explaining the precautions you will take to minimize the risks when they enter the dental office.

It will also be necessary to check your local county health department to see if they have policies that might be more stringent than this Public Order. Some counties may change their current policy to follow this statewide order. But other counties such as Summit and Salt Lake have established later dates that may take precedence. Go to https://ualhd.org/ and check your specific local information. Other additional resources and information will be posted at www.coronavirus.utah.gov and www.ada.org/virus

As a final note, check with your malpractice insurance carrier to address the potential need for a consent form or any other restrictions that could affect coverage when resuming elective procedures during this pandemic.

We realize wise clinical judgement will be necessary to safely move forward with elective procedures. It is highly critical that we use caution when resuming dental treatments. We do not want to be careless and allow this virus to significantly spread to require increasing restrictions again. The UDA recommends proceeding cautiously, safely and use sound professional judgement in every individual situation.

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