

Dental Services During The COVID Pandemic

Information to Patients In Scotland

As the lockdown measures continue to ease in Scotland it's now possible to access a wider range of dental services within your local community

Getting help with a dental problem

If you have a dental problem you should in the first instance always telephone the dental practice that you normally attend.

Not registered with a dental practice

If you are not registered with any dental practice then your nearest dental practice will still be able to help. They will provide you with information on contacting your local health board hub for advice on dental emergencies

Dental emergencies include, but are not limited to :-

- toothache or mouth pain
- abscesses and swellings in and around the mouth
- bleeding
- trauma
- non-healing ulcers that have no obvious cause and last for several weeks

Visiting your dental practice for treatment

High street dental practices are beginning to open and will be able to provide a much wider range of dental services than has so far been possible since the start of lockdown. Whilst it is still necessary to prioritise the needs of patients with urgent dental problems your dentist will now be able to start providing a limited range of routine dental treatments.

Dental care treatment centre

Your dentist may refer you to an urgent dental care centre if:

- they think your urgent dental problem requires an aerosol generating procedure (AGP)
- you have an urgent dental problem and the symptoms of coronavirus

If this happens, your dentist may:

- provide advice on managing your symptoms
- prescribe antibiotics to control any localised infection until your face to face appointment can be arranged with the urgent dental care centre.

What is an Aerosol Generating Procedure (AGP)?

Most routine and urgent dental care relies on the use of dental equipment that generates a fine spray of air and water, or aerosol. The water droplets in this spray can carry coronavirus particles that may be absorbed through the nose, mouth or eyes and risk transmission of the virus. Any move forward in the delivery of dental services will be based on ensuring that we balance the oral health needs of patients against the risk of virus transmission protecting both patients and dental teams.

Your dental appointment

It is essential that we maintain physical distancing to ensure your continued safety. With this in mind most dental practices will only open a single treatment room for a limited number of patients per day. Each dental practice will have an approach to physical distancing that is appropriate to its own premises. This information will be provided to you should you require an appointment.

It is still not possible for high street dentists to provide any treatment involving AGPs. This means that routine treatments involving high speed dental drills used to prepare teeth for most permanent fillings and crowns are still not possible.

Dental treatments

We have been able to return some of the services you normally expect from your dentist and aim to expand this as quickly as possible and when it is safe to do so.

The range of treatments available from high street dental practices will increase, depending on the available scientific evidence of the risks.

Work is ongoing to fully understand the risks associated with coronavirus and this will inform future decisions.

Urgent dental care centres

Your local urgent dental care centre may be able to offer some treatments that your local dental practice cannot. We have expanded the capacity of urgent dental care centres to allow them to see more patients and carry out a wider range of treatments for your dental problems.

In addition to the treatment available in your local dental practice, urgent dental care centres may, in some cases be able to remove the nerve of your tooth as this can sometimes provide relief.

Some additional treatments may be provided based upon your clinical need and considering the risks and benefits of the procedure Your safety and the safety of others is an essential consideration when providing treatment in urgent dental care centres.

Getting to your local urgent dental treatment centre

If you have difficulty in travelling safely to the urgent dental care centre you should tell the dentist you speak to on the phone. Your health board will contact you about your travel requirements.