



Questions and Answers about COVID-19

The following patient information is provided by the BC Dental Association (BCDA) based on information from the College of Dental Surgeons of BC (College) and the Provincial Health Officer. Learn more at the College COVID-19 information page at cdsbc.org/Pages/covid-19-info.aspx.

1 Where can I get answers to my questions about COVID-19?

British Columbians can reach service representatives seven days a week, from 7:30am to 8pm, by calling **1-888-COVID19**. Information is available in more than 110 languages.

2 I went to the dentist the week after the dental conference, do I need to self-isolate?

No. Advice from the Office of the Provincial Health Officer indicates that only the dentists and dental staff who attended the dental conference need to self-isolate until Sunday, March 22.

3 How do dentists ensure that patients are protected from being infected?

Dental clinics are like mini-hospitals and are required to follow strict infection and exposure controls on an ongoing basis. Dentists comply with Infection Control Standards set by the College. The BCDA has also provided dentists with an Exposure Control Plan that outlines requirements for Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) as a standard practice for managing all patients – all the time. Both of these documents are posted on the BCDA website under COVID-19.

4 If dental offices are so safe, why has elective and non-essential dental treatment been suspended indefinitely?

This was a prudent decision to adhere to the requirement for social distancing and mitigate unnecessary patient contact. On March 17, the Provincial Health Officer declared a “Public Health Emergency” which means that all elective medical and dental procedures are suspended until further notice. Suspending these services ensures that protective equipment and essential human resources can be directed to critical care areas until the crisis has passed.

5 If dentists are responsible to treat dental emergencies, such as uncontrolled bleeding, infection, swelling or trauma/accident. How do I know I’m safe?

Dentists follow Infection Control and Exposure Control guidelines as a regular course of practice. With the focus of containing the COVID-19 virus, **until March 22**, dentists who attended the dental conference are required to manage emergencies by phone first (prescribe antibiotics or pain relief as required). *Dentists who did not attend the conference can provide essential as well as emergency care in their office now.* **After March 22**, all dentists can provide essential as well as emergency care in their office following standard protocols if the patient does not have symptoms. If the patient has cold or flu symptoms, the dentist can treat the patient in their practice or refer the patient to a clinic or hospital with required Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in place.

As regulated health care professionals, dentists share the primary responsibility to keep patients and staff safe. They are committed to lessen the burden on overtaxed hospitals by treating dental patients in their clinics within the guidelines provided.

6 What should I do if I think I have COVID-19?

The Public Health Agency of Canada has provided instructions for the steps you are expected to take in a fact sheet called [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\): How to isolate at home when you have COVID-19](#). A new COVID-19 assessment tool is also available at covid19.thrive.health/.

7 What is the difference between “self-isolate”, “self-monitor” and “quarantine”?

Please refer to a very helpful resource from the Public Health Agency of Canada titled [Know the Difference: Self-monitoring, self-isolation, and isolation for COVID-19](#).