

18th March 2020

All Wales Clinical Dental Leads COVID-19 Group

Coronavirus Dental Alert Level Amber

Amber is a short dynamic phase between green (normal working with identification of potential coronavirus cases) and Red (when only urgent dental care will be provided).

In the early stages of this phase, practices may be able to continue delivering some routine dental services to patients. However, the primary aim of any treatment provided should be to stabilise patients with dental conditions that could cause problems during a phase of 'emergency and urgent only' care.

During the later stages of this phase, practices may be affected by supply (particularly disinfection and PPE) and resource issues e.g. staff shortages making it no longer viable or safe to continue with routine procedures, therefore some practices may be operating as emergency only or may be unable to operate.

Aims:

- Prioritise delivery of emergency care to patients with suspected or confirmed Coronavirus at designated emergency dental care treatment centres,
- Prioritise delivery of emergency and urgent dental care to patients without Coronavirus at emergency sites for non-infected patients and most dental practice sites,
- Minimise transmission of coronavirus within dental practices by minimising aerosol spray generation,
- Maintain non-aerosol generating routine dental care for non-symptomatic patients stabilising dental problems in a response which is proportionate to the remaining practice resources.

Key points

Emergency Dental Services

Centres for emergency dental services should be in place for non-infected and infected patients.

People who have confirmed or suspected coronavirus should delay all non-emergency dental treatment.

People with emergency dental conditions who have confirmed or suspected coronavirus should be treated for a designated Coronavirus for emergency dental care.

Emergency appointments for people with Coronavirus should be made via a central booking system (presently 111 with pathways to local teams).

Dental Care

Aim to stabilise patients who may have dental conditions that may cause problems during a time of emergency only treatment.

Scale down/ reduce non-essential aerosol based care for all patients if this case poses a risk to dental team members and patients.

Urgent dental conditions e.g. suspicious ulcers/lesions should be seen promptly.

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While there are resources to do so (staff, PPE etc) some “routine” procedures may continue in practice (whilst minimising the use of aerosols) but practices are encouraged to focus on addressing urgent dental problems to ensure patients are able to eat, speak and function without pain.

Delay routine dental care for people who are at higher risk from Coronavirus patients e.g. older people, people with health conditions that put them at risk, pregnant women (this includes people living in institutions e.g. residential care and prisons).

Discourage attendance at dental surgeries for unnecessary procedures.

Dental Cross infection

Ensure enhanced cross infection control measures are encouraged for all practices.

Recommended personal protective equipment should be worn (e.g. well-fitting fluid resistant mask, visor, gloves and outwear in accordance with guidance).

Appropriate measures for separation in time, place and person particularly for sites managing COVID patients.

Sites managing infected patients should follow all recommended decontamination procedures (in accordance with guidance).

Staff well-being

Risk assess and redeploy dental staff who are in “at risk” groups e.g. elderly, pregnant and those with health conditions which put them at particular risk from COVID.

Ensure staff follow guidance on self-isolation if they or a member of their household develop symptoms.

Where possible, implement measures to support staff well-being.

Record Keeping and Communication

Keep a record of absences and work carried out.

Keep the Health Boards updated if the practice is unable to remain open so that they are able to plan services for dental emergencies and redeploy staff to support services.

Useful information

Aerosols are generated in dentistry through patient behaviours (coughing and sneezing) and through dental treatment. Measures should be taken to reduce minimise the risks of transmission associated with aerosols from all dental procedures.

Principles

- Avoid and/or reduce (amount, duration and unnecessary use of) use of aerosol generating procedures.
- Employ measures to remove aerosols in particular four-handed dentistry and high-volume suction are strongly recommended.
- Use recommended personal protective equipment PPE and ensure face protection when generating aerosols.

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Procedures/ equipment which can generate significant aerosol

- Handpieces (turbine)
- Air abrasion
- Ultrasonic Scaler
- Air polishing
- Slow speed handpiece polishing and brushing
- 3 in 1 syringe
- Intraoral radiographs (can stimulate saliva and coughing)
- Procedures that induce coughing, or sneezing or gagging

Measures to reduce aerosols

Technique/ measure	Recommendation
High volume suction	Essential
Personal protection PPE: Face masks, visors, gloves and protective outwear in accordance with guidance.	Essential
Using 4 handed techniques for dentistry	Strongly recommended
Reduce unnecessary use of and time spent on procedures generating significant aerosol	Strongly recommended
Dry field operating (rubber dam*, cotton wool rolls)	Recommended where clinically appropriate
Alternate procedures to reduce aerosol use via handpieces (e.g. ART. chemotherapeutic caries removal)	Recommended as an option where clinically appropriate
Resorbable sutures	Recommended as an option where clinically appropriate to reduce clinical contact
Extraoral radiographs	Recommended where needed
Pre-procedural mouth rinse	Hydrogen peroxide mouth rinse suggested to reduce amount of virus in aerosol (but evidence not clear the extent of this for COVID)

*Rubber Dam in combination with high volume saliva ejectors can reduce aerosol. Pre-treatment disinfection swabbing of isolated teeth isolated with rubber dam may also reduce the viral aerosol load.

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