COVID-19 “What If” Scenarios
by Vicki Wilbers, Missouri Dental Association Executive Director

There have been some consistent questions regarding COVID-19 exposures or positive tests. Following are some basic FAQs I thought would be helpful to share, which have been written in coordination with Dr. John Dane, State Dental Director, and reviewed by the State Epidemiologist.

FOR POSITIVE TEST RESULTS

What do I do if I (the dentist) test positive for COVID-19?

- Isolate yourself immediately.
- Identify family and close contacts.
- Contact the County Health Department and provide information to assess and discuss with the public health authorities a testing plan for your office staff.
- Notify patients from 3-6 days prior to developing symptoms.
- Close your office for 14 days.
- Have a thorough cleaning of the office done prior to re-entry.

What do I do if a staff member tests positive for COVID-19?

- The staff member should isolate him/herself and quarantine immediately.
- The staff member should notify the County Health Department to assess and discuss a testing plan for his/her family and/or those living with them.
- The dental office should assess which dental team members had exposure to a positive tested staff person. The office should assess and discuss with the County Health Department a testing plan for the dental office.
- Any contact with patients by the staff person, notify patients from 3-6 days prior to the symptoms.
- Thoroughly clean the office.
- Possible closure of office for 14 days. You (the dentist) and members of the dental team might be able to work via teledentistry based on when the staff member was exposed in relation to being in the dental office and the work they performed. Closing the office might end up being the best scenario.

I work in a dental office; what do I do if someone living with me tests positive for COVID-19 or if I have close contact with someone who tests positive?

- Isolate yourself and family and/or those living with you.
- Get tested. Normally you can have testing done within 2-5 days of being exposed but symptoms might not appear until 7-8 days, so you may have to be tested again.
- Notify the County Health Department to assist with coordination of a testing strategy for yourself, family, those living with you and possibly those you have had come into close contact with.
- Do not return to the dental office until testing result is known. If you test negative, you can return to the office with highest PPE recommendation of the OSHA and the CDC. The usage of an N95 mask with a face shield is important for up to 14 days. You should be checking symptoms
regularly and if symptoms appear you should isolate yourself and retest. If you have a positive test refer to the Q & A on what to do if a staff member test positive for COVID-19.

FOR EXPOSURES

What do I do if someone within the dental team (including the dentist) has a family member or someone living with them that becomes exposed to a person that tests positive for COVID-19?

- Notify the County Health Department and allow them to determine the risk.
- Testing might be suggested.
- Recommendations could be anything from monitoring symptoms to quarantining for the whole family.
- The staff member or dentist may be instructed to quarantine.
- If the dentist is quarantined, then he/she might be able to use teledentistry to continue to have staff work in the office.

The above is the best reference at the time for how to handle positive tests or exposures to COVID-19. As these things are consistently changing, it is important to keep updated and informed on how to handle the scenarios. Your Local/County Health Department also serves as an excellent resource. Find their contact information at health.mo.gov/living/lpha.

Additionally, on ADA.org/Virus you can find the ADA Return to Work Interim Guidance Toolkit which includes a COVID-19 Hazard Assessment & Checklist for the dental office, with excellent assessment tools to help you document information. The ADA is continually developing new and updated materials like these and the Patient Return Resources to assist members.

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