

Dental Offices Not Open for Full Services May 19

May 14, 2020, 12:00pm: The BC Dental Association (BCDA) advises patients that dental offices will not be returning to regular practice May 19. Full dental services, including hygiene care, will be introduced gradually and when it is safe to do so. As evidenced in other provinces, there is no singular approach to restarting services. Plans for BC will consider the different circumstances in various areas, including access to required personal protective equipment (PPE).

When Premier John Horgan announced the provincial government's [BC Restart Plan](#) on May 6, many patients assumed dental offices would be returning to regular services on May 19. However, as the Premier and Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry, confirmed in media briefings May 13, WorkSafeBC and public health officials have *begun* to develop guidelines for various sectors, including dentistry, to extend services – but they have not been published yet.

As we can all appreciate, the guidelines to protect patients, dentists and dental staff need to be aligned based on the epidemiology of managing the risk of COVID-19 in BC.

On May 13, Dr. Henry indicated that new guidelines are currently being worked on with regulators, including the College of Dental Surgeons of BC, *“Direction is going to be provided, and we’re working on that with the regulatory authorities, the colleges for all the regulated health professions, on incremental changes and the guidance they need to move forward over the next couple of weeks.”*

“Dental teams are experts at infection control and dentists want to ensure their practices are appropriately set up to comply with physical distancing and other particular requirements to reduce the transmission of COVID-19”, says BCDA spokesperson, Dr. Alastair Nicoll.

Dr. Nicoll continued, “Dental offices have been limited to tele-dentistry and emergency care since March 23. When the public health orders change, and patients begin returning to dental offices, the dental visit will look different. For example, chairs, magazines and toys will be removed from waiting rooms, and the receptionist may be sitting behind a plexiglass screen. Patients will also be asked different health screening questions when making their appointment and on the day of their appointment; and asked to clean their hands before and after their appointment. These and other changes will be communicated by your dental office once the new guidelines are published.”

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“By all means, dental patients should contact their dentist to schedule an appointment, but please understand that until further direction is provided by the Provincial Health Officer and the College of Dental Surgeons of BC, dentists are only permitted to provide emergency and urgent services.”, said Dr. Nicoll.

BCDA encourages patients to contact their dentist for any dental emergency or dental concern. If you're looking for a dentist, visit BCDA's YourDentalHealth.ca website.

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