



# Questions and Answers about COVID-19

The following patient information is provided by the BC Dental Association (BCDA) based on information and direction from the Provincial Health Officer and the College of Dental Surgeons of BC (College). See the dental College COVID-19 information page at [cadsbc.org/Pages/covid-19-info.aspx](https://cadsbc.org/Pages/covid-19-info.aspx).

## 1 Are dental offices across BC open or closed right now?

On March 23, Dr. Bonnie Henry, BC's Provincial Health Officer (PHO), declared a **Public Health Emergency**, meaning **all elective medical and dental procedures** (including hygiene appointments) are suspended until further notice to reduce COVID-19 transmission.

The College of Dental Surgeons of BC (College), however still requires dentists **to manage dental emergencies for their patients**. This includes **uncontrolled bleeding, pain, swelling and trauma**. To respect the order of the PHO and minimize the risk of transmission in this pandemic, dentists must:

1. **Try to manage** dental emergencies over the phone first (prescribing options that do not include treatment in a dental office);
2. **If deemed necessary**, treat the emergency in their office so long as they enforce the infection control standards set by the PHO – and avoid aerosol-generating procedures unless equipped with the additional required Personal Protective Equipment (PPE); and
3. **If absolutely necessary**, refer the patient to a **dental emergency clinic** that has the required PPE to conduct aerosol-producing procedures (i.e. drilling, suction or creating a spray)

## 2 If dentists are responsible to treat dental emergencies, how do I know I'm safe?

Dentists follow [Infection Control and Exposure Control Guidelines](#) as a regular course of practice. Patients with dental pain, swelling, infection or trauma **must first** be assessed by their local General Practice dentist over the phone. To reduce the risk of transmission, **only the most urgent dental cases** will be referred to an appropriately equipped dental clinic for treatment. [View BCDA's current list of Dental Emergency Dental Clinics](#).

As regulated health care professionals, dentists share the primary responsibility to help keep patients and staff safe. They are also committed to lessen the burden on hospital

emergency rooms by treating dental patients in properly equipped dental clinics. Once the PHO determines that the COVID-19 crisis has passed, patients will be able to return to their local dentist for all dental procedures.

## 3 How do dentists ensure that patients are protected from infection?

Dental clinics are like mini-hospitals and are required to follow strict infection and exposure controls on an ongoing basis. Dentists comply with [Infection Prevention and Control Guidelines](#) set by the College. BCDA also provides dentists with an Exposure Control Plan outlining the requirements for PPE as a standard practice for managing all patients – **all the time**. This includes the use of gloves, masks and face shields or eyewear to keep both the practitioner and the patient safe.

**Note:** PPE is in **very short supply**, as available PPE is currently directed at urgent medical services. At this time, if a dental office does not have the required PPE to treat you, they will need to defer your care.

## 4 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 and support app is also available at [covid19.thrive.health/](https://covid19.thrive.health/).

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

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

## 6 What is the difference between "self-isolate", "self-monitor" and "quarantine"?

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](#).