

GEORGETOWN ADVANCED DENTISTRY

Dear patients, colleagues and friends,

With the advent of the Novel Coronavirus, it has become abundantly clear that meticulous scientific analysis is at the core of providing safe and appropriate medical/dental care to our community, while protecting them from the ravages of this unique disease. With this in mind, I feel compelled to share my thoughts with you regarding the muddled recommendations concerning the safety and wisdom of visits to the dentist.

You are probably aware of the recommendations from the WHO (the World Health Organization) regarding routine dental care visits during the pandemic, in which they seem to advise postponement of non-essential - "hygiene" (cleanings) and "checkup" - dental treatment. However, their terminology is confusing and we feel that it indicates a lapse of judgement as to the critically important role that dental and oral health plays in our overall health and safety.

Herewith is our reasoning on this subject:

a) As with all forms of medical care, dental care is essential to prevent and/or treat diseases that cause pain, suffering and infections which, if left undiagnosed and treated, can result in hospitalization and even death. Dental care is not "elective". Rather, it is a guardian to preserving health and keeping patients out of the hospital (a place that, right now, is one of the most dangerous places to be).

At the time of every patient visit, we (dentists and hygienists) evaluate, diagnose and, when disease is found, treat the problem. In addition, we often discover non-dental systemic diseases which we then refer to the appropriate specialist(s). Often the conditions are simple to treat, because we catch them early - a cavity, a minor infection, a tumor, a fractured tooth, gum disease. However, when patients delay "routine care" or "cleanings", serious, costly and sometimes dangerous problems can develop. Early diagnosis is especially critical for oral-pharyngeal cancer where diagnosis of small carcinomas is critical for survival.

b) It is helpful to keep in mind that there are NO (zero) documented cases of a patient in the United States contracting Covid-19 from a visit to the dentist.

c) Unlike physicians, dentists in the U.S., since 1985, have routinely employed extensive PPE - masks, gloves, protective eyewear, hand sanitizers, strong sanitizers for surface wipedown between each patient. Every single day. This was a consequence of the advent of HIV and has continued to this day. In short, we are wired to protect our patients in this way. We embrace the belief of the dental profession that patient safety is our most solemn responsibility.

d) The ADA (American Dental Association) and the CDC (Centers for Disease Control) have issued statements that disagree with the WHO recommendation that routine dental visits be postponed. Details as to the content of this disagreement will be provided upon request. Based on extensive scientific data and a series of recommendations (which I closely monitor on a daily basis), it is clear that any patient (with a few notable exceptions) who needs urgent OR routine dental care, should not neglect obtaining this care. This includes biannual checkups and cleanings. The risks of postponing (as described above) are significant. The above-mentioned notable exceptions include: the necessity of traveling to appointments via public transportation (subway, bus, Uber/taxi); seeking routine care when ill, particularly with respiratory ailments; the presence of a fulminant immune disorder.

e) My staff and I have developed a list of prophylactic steps - the Critical 14 - to ensure maximal protection for our patients and ourselves, as follows:

1. We require completion of a comprehensive (but simple) patient questionnaire prior to every visit.
2. We require patients to maintain proper mask use outside the operatory.
3. We restrict occupancy of the waiting area to one seated patient. If absolutely necessary, a second patient may be seated 8 feet away. All surfaces will be clear of any reading material.
4. We maintain a hand-sanitizing station for required patient use upon entry and exit.
5. We obtain blood oxygen reading and temperature checks upon entry.
6. We employ and encourage contactless payment and pens are single use.
7. All staff wear masks throughout the day.
8. Protective gowns over scrubs and hairnets are used during all restorative procedures.
9. High-volume ventilation is maintained throughout the day. As a result it is a tad bit "cool" in the office.
10. Clinical areas are cleaned with virucidal/bactericidal wipes before and after every procedure (including countertops, cabinets, chairs, glass, lights), with a 10 minute "resting" period before the next patient is seated.
11. We provide all patients a one-minute rinse with molecular iodine prior to treatment.
12. All handpieces are sterilized. Between each patient the water lines are irrigated with molecular iodine for one minute.
13. We use electric handpieces for all intraoral procedures. These produce exceedingly minimal aerosol which does not spread extra-orally because there is no compressed air.
14. We have installed a state-of-the-art certified upper airway sterilization system with UV-C light sterilization in each operatory.

Above all, we wish for each of you to remain safe. This means not only maintaining your dental/medical health, but also to care for your mental/emotional health. Our sincere recommendation is that you stay connected to friends and family, even if at a distance; read uplifting literature (poems, novels, essays, biblical liturgy, philosophy); listen to music that you love; take walks (wearing a mask when appropriate); eat well and healthily; find ways to laugh and ways to mitigate pessimism, stress and anger. If you experience emotional distress, you are welcome to call me or Diana, my hygienist. We will assist you in any way we can.

With our warmest well wishes,

Sinclair, Diana, Jayleen and Kristen



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