

Updated May 20, 2021

## DENTAL APPOINTMENTS & COVID-19: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **Can I put off my dental appointment until after the COVID-19 pandemic is over?**

Regular dental appointments are an important part of taking care of your overall health. While it can be tempting to put off your regular checkup until things feel more “normal” again, we advise against this. Routine appointments give us an opportunity to check for a number of health conditions and catch them early. Some conditions, like tooth decay, can be more difficult, painful, and expensive to treat if left undetected. Your health and safety are, and has always been, our top priority. We are taking every precaution to limit the risk of COVID-19 transmission during your visit.

### **What are you doing differently because of COVID-19?**

There are a number of science-backed steps we are taking to help limit the spread of COVID-19. These include:

- Increased personal protective equipment, including masks, face shields, goggles, and surgical gowns or long-sleeved lab coats.
- Increased cleaning protocols, including the use of disinfectants known to kill the coronavirus that causes COVID-19, removing high-touch items like magazines and toys from waiting rooms, and frequently cleaning items like pens and clipboards.
- Asking you to change your behavior by asking you to wait outside rather than in waiting rooms when possible, encourage wearing face masks, and not bringing additional people to your appointment.
- Here is what you can expect at UT Dentists:
  - We are spacing out appointments and treatment areas.
  - To make sure patients are healthy, our team may call you to ask some health-related screening questions before your scheduled visit.
  - As a safety precaution to patients, families and employees, we are currently unable to allow visitors or companions. There are two exceptions to this rule: (1) If the appointment is for a minor, the legal guardian or proxy must also be present and (2) For adult patients who requires assistance, one adult may accompany the patient.
  - You are strongly encouraged to wear a mask or face covering to your appointment, practice social distancing and follow all posted

signage while in the building. If you do not have a mask, one will be provided.

- Upon entry into the building, you will be asked to use hand sanitizer. Your temperature will be taken (must be < 100.1°F) and you will be asked to complete the screening questions from the [UTSD Screening Questionnaire](#). Once cleared, you will be directed to our clinic complete the check-in process.

**I've heard it's safer to schedule your appointment for first thing in the morning — the office will be cleaner because there haven't been patients coming through before me. Is that true?**

You should schedule your dental appointment for the time of day that works for you. The same enhanced cleaning protocols occur all day long, including leaving the room empty after a patient leaves to allow the appropriate time necessary as part of thoroughly cleaning and disinfecting of the space between patients.

**How is your dental team monitoring themselves for COVID-19?**

Staff at our practice are subject to daily health screenings. This includes temperature checks to make sure they don't have a fever and asking them a series of health-related questions each day to make sure they're not experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19.

**You said you cannot see me as a patient because of my COVID-19 risk. Can you do that?**

Yes. The safety of our patients and the dental team is our highest priority. As dentists, we use our professional judgment and guidance from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Dental Association (ADA) to determine risk levels for seeing patients. If a patient was determined to be of high risk, or had a high temperature on the day of their appointment, we can have a conversation about which factors determined delay of service, so that they can self-monitor and reschedule.

**What about teledentistry? Can I substitute a virtual visit for my regular appointment?**

A phone or video appointment isn't the same as your regular appointment. Teledentistry can be helpful in some situations, such as deciding if an oral health issue you're experiencing is an emergency that requires immediate treatment or if it's something that can wait a bit. If you think you may be experiencing a dental emergency, call our office and we'll help you decide if you need to come in.