



Dental Hygienists: Keeping You Healthy and Safe During a Pandemic

What has changed at your dental office during the COVID-19 pandemic?

COVID-19 has created new challenges for the dental profession. Because the virus is spread by droplets from the nose and mouth, and possibly by aerosols, oral health professionals are following even more rigorous infection control protocols to protect you, your family, and everyone in the office. These protocols vary by province, but here is what you should expect until the pandemic subsides.



- Office staff will wear either a surgical mask or a N95 mask at all times.
- Your dental hygienist may also wear a head covering and/or shoe coverings.
- You will be asked to wear a mask and to practise physical distancing within the office before and after your appointment.
- You may be asked to rinse your mouth with a hydrogen peroxide-based solution to reduce viruses in your mouth. This rinse may have a slightly unpleasant taste.
- Operatories may now have permanent or temporary doors to contain any potential contaminants from aerosol-generating procedures, such as the use of ultrasonic scalers and handpieces (e.g., “drills”) for teeth polishing and fillings.
- Your dental hygienist may only use hand instruments to remove plaque and calculus and may postpone polishing to a later visit to avoid producing aerosols.
- You may be asked to wear a gown or large bib if an aerosol-generating procedure is required.
- You may hear about fallow time, which is the amount of time an operatory is left unoccupied after an appointment to let any contaminants in the air settle before the room is cleaned.
- You may see air purifiers in each operatory to clean the air more quickly and decrease fallow time.

Whether during a pandemic or when the world returns to normal, your dental hygienist is committed to providing the safest possible environment to keep you and your family healthy.