

## PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF COVID-19: INFECTION CONTROL IN DENTAL PRACTICES

**By Patterson Dental**

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Although every patient who enters a dental office should be treated as if they could have an infectious disease; times like these help us pause, take a step back and make sure we're compliant with current guidelines set by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). Here are some ways to make sure your dental office is OSHA compliant as well as a 50% discount on OSAP infection control and prevention education.

Protecting yourself, your staff and your patients has become easier thanks in large part to advancements in vaccination and the combined work of agencies like the American Dental Association (ADA), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Organization for Safety, Asepsis and Prevention (OSAP), and dental practices everywhere.

While instances of cross-transmission in dentistry are now exceedingly rare, it's important to remain vigilant, take advantage of the latest research and technologies, and implement comprehensive staff training to ensure your practice is as protected as possible. Below, we've collected some of the best infection prevention tools available to help you keep your team and your patients healthy and safe from infection.

### **Keep your staff up to date on OSHA safety and compliance**

Hold meetings weekly to discuss what has been done in the office, what needs to be done and create a process and checklist specific to COVID-19 prevention. OSHA compliance should be completed in your dental office yearly to ensure your licensed staff is keeping up with their state guidelines on credits. But during unprecedented times like these, [keeping your staff up to date and educated](#) on a consistent basis is key to keeping a healthy and protected dental office.

Infection prevention must be made a priority in any dental health care setting. At least one individual with training in infection prevention should be appointed as an OSHA safety officer to keep track of education, and everything your office is doing to stay OSHA compliant. This person will be responsible for developing written infection prevention policies and procedures based on evidence-based guidelines, regulations or standards. Policies and procedures should be tailored to the dental setting and reassessed on a regular basis.

OSAP offers a convenient way to make sure your office and team is always functioning at its highest performance when it comes to OSAP standards. OSAP's [Infection Control in Practice \(ICIP\)](#) is a bi-monthly staff engagement publication that combines real-life scenarios with charts, checklists and resources.

## Tools for infection prevention

Along with keeping yourself and your staff up-to-date with the latest protocols from OSHA and OSAP, it's important to keep your dental office equipped with the latest technology, disinfectants and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Here are four areas to consider:

**Teledentistry:** Screening patients via teledentistry before their appointments will help eliminate potential illnesses from entering your clinic. Teledentistry also allows you to screen certain emergency cases to see what kind of care they may need. According to the CDC, any emergency dental patient being seen during the COVID-19 pandemic should be screened before entering the clinic. If there are signs the patient might be sick and there is not a life-threatening illness, the CDC recommends having that patient stay home. Teledentistry during these uncertain times has proven to be a [useful tool within practices to communicate and connect with their patients when needed](#).

**Surface Disinfectants:** With so many aerosols in a dental office and overall contamination during procedures, it is important to make sure you are not only using the correct surface disinfectants, but that you are also using them correctly. Make sure your surface disinfectant has broad-spectrum bactericidal activity. For example, [Medicom ProSurface Disinfectant Wipes](#) deliver broad-spectrum bactericidal activity, eliminating 48 pathogens including bacteria, viruses, fungi and tuberculosis in approximately one minute. Patterson offers a variety of surface disinfectants that meet these requirements, including [Patterson pdCARE™ Wipes](#).

**Barrier Protection:** Light handles, X-ray buttons, tray covers, laser screens, keyboards and headrests for the dental chair are all barriers that need to be wiped down with a surface disinfectant or removed after every procedure.

**Waterline Cleaners** - [DentaPure Independent Water Bottle Cartridge \(Crosstex\)](#) is an in-line attachment designed for installation in the unit's independent water supply bottle. The cartridge uses iodinated resin technology to purify incoming water to  $\leq 200$  CFU/mL, exceeding potable water quality standards.

Other ways you can make sure your water lines are purified include: water tablets, waterline testing and having a support team that can come out and check on your waterlines outside of routine maintenance to make sure everything is running properly. Patterson Dental service technicians have the technology and knowledge to assure sure your waterlines are meeting current OSHA standards.

According to OSHA regulations, employers must provide information, training and appropriate PPE for their employees. This includes proper scrubs/operator jackets, masks, shields, protective glasses, along with adhering to proper OSHA-compliant protocol before, during and after procedures.

## Infection control and prevention education

As we navigate through these trying times —taking care of emergency patients, opening our offices and getting back to normal — it can be overwhelming to make sure you are checking all

the boxes. [OSAP has created an eHandbook](#) along with an assessment for you and your staff to make OSHA compliance and education easier.

OSAP is working with the DALE Foundation to develop the OSAP-DALE Foundation Dental Infection Prevention and Control Certificate Program. This program will include the understandings of the CDC's Infection Prevention Practices in Dental Settings, an Infection Prevention and Control eHandbook and an assessment. [Click here to learn more](#) – save 50% through April 30 using code SAVE50 at checkout.

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From Patterson Dental's blog, Off the Cusp. View the original blog post:  
<https://www.offthecusp.com/how-to-automate-patient-engagement/>