

PATIENTS, TEAM AND OFFICE – WHAT TO THINK ABOUT AS YOU LOOK TO REOPEN YOUR DENTAL PRACTICE

By Patterson Dental

May 1, 2020

With the impact of the coronavirus pandemic to our country, the last couple of months have left communities feeling uneasy about transitioning back to a “normal” life. Your office may have been closed for the past few weeks, which has come with new obstacles to tackle within your business. Reopening your dental practice can be a stressful task that may not be well rehearsed among your staff. Read through the below checklist for what to consider when reopening your dental practice. Creating a task list, communicating with your staff and patients, and ensuring a safe office space will help assure a smooth reopening transition.

Communicate with your patients

- **Is your website up to date?**
 - Add a webpage with up-to-date COVID-19 information. This will assure your patients you are staying abreast of the latest developments and are taking every precaution to make sure your office is as clean and safe as possible.
- **Is your social media active and providing relevant content?**
 - In a time where our only form of connecting with one another is via technology, keeping up with your social media posts is more important than ever. Make sure you are letting your patients know when your staff is back in the office, what your staff is doing to get the office ready to reopen and when they can expect to start rescheduling their missed and future appointments.
 - Provide patient education. At this time, a lot of patients will be behind on their routine cleanings; providing tips on how to effectively keep up with good hygiene will help those patients until they are able to get back into a regular routine. This will also help remind patients how important oral hygiene is to their overall health.
- **Have you sent out email communication to your patients?**
 - Email communication is so important right now. Letting your patients know that you are excited to see them back in the office and keeping them informed of a possible reopen date is key to staying connected.
 - Remind your patients about their routine cleanings that they may need to reschedule; this could also be a good time to include at-home oral hygiene tips.

- Communicate and share any relevant infection control precautions your office is taking to assure you're keeping your patients, staff and community safe.
- **Do you have a plan in place to reschedule any cancelled appointments?**
 - With an office being down for weeks, there are many patients who will need to be rescheduled. Summer is the busiest time of year for most dental offices so having a plan in place and making room for those reschedules will help get everyone back on track and assure your patients that you are aware of the need for the reschedules.
- **Are you extending hours to see those patients who missed their appointments during the closure?**
 - Create a plan around extended hours if needed, check your staffing for those hours and communicate to patients that you will be available those extra hours to see the backflow of patients who were missed while your office was closed.

Communicate with your staff

- **Bring the team back together to build morale and set goals.**
 - As with any type of office disruption, it's important to bring your team back together and align before reopening. Team morale might be down after a tough few weeks and reassuring your staff that you are there for them and ready to get the office back on track will help motivate everyone to [make sure the office is running successfully](#).
 - Review processes in the office for potential issues that might arise with a busy schedule.
 - Share possible scenarios that may arise and talk through them to prepare your staff for handling various situations with patients. Situations may include reviewing patient account balances; rescheduling appointments, knowing desired times and days may not be available right away; and answering questions regarding COVID-19 and communicating precautions your office is taking.
- **[Review Occupational Safety and Health Administration \(OSHA\) safety standards and precautions with your staff.](#)**
 - Along with your yearly refresher course of OSHA compliance, adding on this extra review will help keep your staff up to date with the day-to-day changes of COVID-19 information.

Make your office a safe place

- **Take extra precautions to assure your office is a safe environment.** Dental offices should always follow OSHA guidelines to ensure each patient is treated as if they might have an infectious disease. But with COVID-19 top-of-mind for many of your patients, it's even more important for patients to feel safe and protected.
 - Post signs in the office to communicate social distancing guidelines.
 - Follow a set procedure for screening patients for COVID-19 symptoms before appointments.
- **Use [teledentistry](#) to connect with patients and answer questions before scheduling appointments.**
 - A lot of offices are now offering teledentistry, which is a great way to stay connected with your patients. For patients who are nervous about coming back to the office, you can let them know that you offer teledentistry for any questions and that you are there once they feel safe and ready for an in-office visit.

- **Declutter the office.** Now is the time to make sure your office is looking its best. Have your employees go in a couple of days before the office reopens to deep clean and declutter to show your patients the extra steps you're taking to keep them safe.
 - Remove anything in the lobby that is not needed or could collect germs including magazines, toys, pens, and similar items.

Additional resources

The above list is only a starting point. As always, the [Patterson Technology Center](#) can help with any issues involving equipment and technology along with territory representatives, equipment specialists and support staff for anything else that may come up. We've also put together an Office Reopening Checklist available for download [here](#). Finally, our [Coronavirus Resource Center](#) includes up-to-date information to help with any concerns related to COVID-19, including a reopening toolkit developed by the American Dental Association (ADA).

- - -

From Patterson Dental's blog, Off the Cusp. View the original blog post:

<https://www.offthecusp.com/patients-team-and-office-what-to-think-about-as-you-look-to-reopen-your-dental-practice/>