

Board Statement on Dental Care during the Pandemic

The American Dental Association (ADA), the Board of Dental Examiners of Alabama (BDEAL), and the Alabama Dental Association (ALDA) firmly believe dental care can continue to be delivered safely. Guidance recommended by the ADA, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the BDEAL continue to safeguard the health of the public. Dental care is essential health care. Regular dental visits are important because treatment, as well as prevention of dental disease, helps keep people healthy and avoids crowding hospital emergency rooms with people seeking relief from dental orofacial pain and infection.

To date, according to the CDC, there has been no documented transmission of COVID-19 in a clinical dental setting in the U.S. Additionally, a study published in [*The Journal of the American Dental Association*](#) found the prevalence of COVID-19 among dentists to be less than one percent. Researchers from the ADA Science and Research Institute and the ADA Health Policy Institute are continuing to collect infection rate data among dentists and have added dental hygienists to the research as well. The preliminary data suggest the monthly incidence rate among dentists has remained below one percent. Comprehensive data from a six-month period will be part of an upcoming publication. Patient and dental team safety is always a foremost concern of dentists.

During the postponement period, an expert task force of the American Dental Association examined existing research to consider standard infection control in dental offices and how it could be augmented even further during the pandemic in order for patients to safely receive the full range of dental care. This led to the development of an ADA COVID-19 interim guidance for dental professionals released in April as state and local governments began reopening certain businesses considered “essential,” including dental practices.

The BDEAL provided Guidance for licensed dentists in Alabama based on the latest scientific knowledge as dentistry in Alabama reopened to patient emergency as well as elective dental procedures. ALDA and the BDEAL worked closely with State Government, the Alabama Department of Public Health, and legislators in a measured process to provide Alabama citizens with dental care.

The BDEAL’s Rules and Guidance call for the highest level of PPE available—masks, goggles and face shields. The guidance also calls for screening patients for COVID-19 symptoms or exposure before dental appointments, the use of high velocity suction during dental procedures whenever possible, and hand scaling when cleaning teeth rather than using ultrasonic scaling to minimize aerosols.

The BDEAL will continue to monitor and update, as needed, patient and staff safety procedures and protocols.