

# COVID-19 Control and Prevention Dental Settings

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. TOSHA is committed to protecting the health and safety of Tennessee's workers and workplaces during these unprecedented times. The following information may help prevent workplace exposures to COVID-19.

While there is no specific TOSHA standard covering COVID-19 exposure, some TOSHA requirements may apply to preventing occupational exposure. Among the most relevant are:

- The General Duty Clause which requires employers to furnish to each worker "employment and a place of employment, which are free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm."
- The Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) standards requiring the use gloves, eye and face protection, and respiratory protection for specific job tasks.
- The Sanitation standards which require employers provide soap, hot and cold (or tepid) water, and individual towels/air blowers be made available in the workplace. The employer is required to permit employees to utilize toilet facilities as needed. In addition, it requires that all workplaces be kept clean to the extent that the nature of the work allows.

Failure to take reasonable actions, such as those listed below, may be a violation of the TOSH act.

The Centers for Disease Control has published [infection control guidance for dental settings during the COVID-19](#) response. These measures should be incorporated with the employer's workplace safety and health program along with the employee protection measures [recommended by OSHA](#). OSHA recommends using a combination of [standard precautions](#), [contact precautions](#), and [droplet precautions](#), including eye protection (e.g., goggles or face shields), to protect dentistry workers performing patient care that does not involve aerosol-generating procedures.

All workplaces should follow the hierarchy of controls to protect employees.

## Engineering Controls

- When possible, install barriers/partitions between employees and patients
- Use local exhaust ventilation to capture and remove mists or aerosols generated during dental care
- Use directional airflow to move air from employee occupied areas, to unoccupied areas

## Administrative Controls

- Use teledentistry for non-emergency dental consultations
- Restrict, as possible, the number of employees in a patient treatment area
- Eliminate aerosol generating procedures when feasible; otherwise, minimize these procedures
- Exclude staff not necessary for aerosol generating procedures
- Utilize safe work practices:
  - Minimize using, or do not use without appropriate precautions, dental handpieces and air-water syringes. The use of ultrasonic scalers is not recommended during this time. Prioritize minimally invasive/atraumatic restorative techniques (hand instruments only).
  - If aerosol-generating procedures are necessary for emergency dental care, use high evacuation suction and dental dams to minimize droplet spatter and aerosols.
  - Perform as many tasks as possible in areas away from patients and individuals accompanying patients (e.g., do not remain in a patient care area to perform charting, sterilization, or other tasks).
  - Workers should avoid touching their faces, including their eyes, noses, and mouths, particularly until after they have thoroughly washed their hands after completing work and/or removing PPE.
  - Train and retrain workers on how to follow established protocols

## Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (See NOTE 1)

- OSHA recommends the following PPE for dentistry during the COVID-19 pandemic:

### Well patients

<i>Dental procedures not involving aerosol-generating procedures</i>	<i>Dental procedures that may or are known to generate aerosols</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Work clothing, such as scrubs, lab coat, and/or smock, or a gown</li><li>▪ Gloves</li><li>▪ Eye protection (e.g., goggles, face shield)</li><li>▪ Face mask (e.g., surgical mask)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Gloves</li><li>▪ Gown (<i>lab coats may be permitted only if purchase of gowns is not possible due to supply issues. See NOTE 2</i>)</li><li>▪ Eye protection (e.g., goggles, face shield)</li><li>▪ NIOSH-certified, disposable N95 filtering facepiece respirator or better</li></ul>

### Patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19

<i>Dental procedures not involving aerosol-generating procedures</i>	<i>Dental procedures that may or are known to generate aerosols</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Gloves</li><li>▪ Gown (<i>lab coats may be permitted only if purchase of gowns is not possible due to supply issues. See NOTE 2</i>)</li><li>▪ Eye protection (e.g., goggles, face shield)</li><li>▪ NIOSH-certified, disposable N95 filtering facepiece respirator or better</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Gloves</li><li>▪ Gown (<i>lab coats may be permitted only if purchase of gowns is not possible due to supply issues. See NOTE 2</i>)</li><li>▪ Eye protection (e.g., goggles, face shield)</li><li>▪ NIOSH-certified, disposable N95 filtering facepiece respirator or better</li></ul>

- Use respiratory protection as part of a comprehensive respiratory protection program that meets the requirements of OSHA's Respiratory Protection standard ([29 CFR 1910.134](#)) and includes:
  - medical exams
  - fit testing (*See NOTE 3*)
  - training

**NOTE 1:** Remove all PPE except respirator in patient room. After exiting patient room, remove respirator, and discard (unless participating in an N95 respirator/PPE disinfection program). Immediately upon removal, practice hand hygiene by washing hands with soap and water.

**NOTE 2:** Disposable gowns should be discarded after each patient. If utilizing lab coats due to lack of supplies, lab coats should be removed after each patient and not re-used until laundered

**NOTE 3:** Initial fit testing is required when N95 respirator (or equivalent, such as KN/KP95, PFF2, etc) use is necessary

**NOTE 4:** Some healthcare facilities, including dental offices, are experiencing shortages of PPE, including gowns, face shields, face masks, and respirators, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This may impact PPE availability for dentistry. See information on PPE flexibilities and prioritization in the [Personal Protective Equipment Flexibilities section](#) within the [Interim Guidance for U.S. Workers and Employers of Workers with Potential Occupational Exposures to SARS-CoV-2](#), above.

In addition to the above, employers should implement basic infection prevention measures such as:

- Train employees about steps they can take to reduce the spread of COVID-19
  - Employees should wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
  - Cover mouth and nose with tissue when coughing or sneezing, or use the inside of the elbow
  - Discard of used tissues in the trash and immediately wash hands with soap and water
  - Place posters that encourage [hand hygiene](#) to [help stop the spread](#) at the entrance to workplaces and in other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen
- Provide alcohol-based hand rubs with at least 60% alcohol at convenient locations throughout the work area
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects such as workstations, keyboards, handrails, doorknobs, etc. To disinfect, use [products that meet EPA's criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2](#), the cause of COVID-19, and are appropriate for the surface. Provide disinfectant wipes in near proximity to commonly used surfaces
- Minimize sharing of tools/equipment when possible
- Allow employees to wear masks over their nose/mouth when respirators are not required to prevent spread of the virus
- Space employees approximately 6 feet or 2 meters apart when possible
  - Temporarily move/reposition workstations
  - Stagger shifts to limit number of employees on site
  - Increase physical distance between employees and customers by installing partitions/drive through
  - Provide services remotely (e.g. phone, video, or internet)
- Increase ventilation rates provided by HVAC system, increase percentage of outdoor air that circulates into the system
- Install high efficiency air filters

For additional information, or to report any safety and health concerns, visit [www.tnosh.gov](http://www.tnosh.gov) or call 1-800-249-8510.

