

Updated July 2021

## **COVID-19: The Effect on the Provision of Dentistry**

The practice has now been open for over a year since the original lock down forced our closure in March 2020. It is highly likely that the way we have been practicing dentistry since 1 July 2020 will continue for some time to come. This is frustrating for all concerned. The relaxation of the COVID social distancing measures in July 2021 are likely to have little or no effect on the way that we deliver dentistry, whilst maintaining a safe environment for our patients and staff.

We have constantly adapted our procedures over the last year and below is a summary of the current situation.

1. Dental Procedures which produce an aerosol of water require the clinical team to wear enhanced PPE. Additionally, after such procedures the dental surgery must be left empty to allow the aerosol of water to settle, thus enabling time for a comprehensive clean of the surgery prior to the next patient. This is known as the Fallow Time and is typically 20-30 minutes long.
2. Because these types of appointments are taking longer it is now more difficult to structure the diaries to make maximum use of the time available. There may be occasions therefore, when we ask to alter the time of your appointment. We will only do this when absolutely necessary.
3. In extreme cases we may have to cancel your appointment at short notice in order to prioritise a dental emergency. We will only do this if absolutely necessary and if the emergency happens to be you, timely treatment will be given.
4. We will continue **not** to make a charge for the Fallow Time based on the clinicians hourly rate, but there will be an additional fee of £30 for all procedures which produce an aerosol of water to cover the cost of the enhanced PPE and lost clinical time.
5. 48 hours notice (2 working days) is required to cancel an appointment. A fee will be charged for this appointment if the time cannot be filled with another patient.

## **Dental Hygienist.**

1. Almost all of Karen's procedures, pre-covid, were aerosol generating procedures. In order to avoid the Fallow Time, she is now carrying out most of her treatments using hand instruments. This is a very effective technique, but takes longer.
2. A typical 20-minute appointment, pre-covid, now takes 30 minutes.
3. What has become apparent over the last 12 months is that a 30-minute appointment for a patient who has not seen the Dental Hygienist since before the March 2020 lockdown is not sufficient.
4. Therefore, all patients who have not been seen since April 2020 will require a 40-minute appointment, at a cost of £92.

5. Regrettably there are some patients who have been booked in for 30-minute appointments, who now need a 40-minute appointment. As a result some appointments may have to be moved and the fee for the appointment may be more than you were expecting. Whilst this is unfortunate, it is vital that patients receive the correct treatment.

6. Because Karen's appointments are now taking so much longer, there is now regrettably a very long wait for a new appointment. We are currently looking at ways to mitigate this long wait, but there is no easy or quick solution.

7. Patients who have a high periodontal risk, who do not wish to wait for an appointment with Karen are able to have the treatment provided by their dentist.

8. Because of the demand for Dental Hygienist appointments, 48 hours notice (2 working days) is required for a cancellation. The full fee will be charged, unless the appointment can be filled by another patient.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact the practice for clarification.

Yours sincerely,

Ian and Suzy James  
Whyman House Dental Practice

### **Whyman House Dental Practice – Patient Fees in the COVID-19 Era**

August 2020

The practice of dentistry has fundamentally changed owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst we are confident that things will return to some semblance of normality over the coming months, we thought it would be transparent to explain our approach to our increased costs.

There are 3 fundamental areas where our operating costs will increase significantly. There are:

1. The increased cost of standard Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). As an example; the standard facemasks that we use in dentistry used to cost us around £2.95 + VAT for a box of 50. Those same masks now cost over £40, an increase of over 1000%. Similar % increases apply to other related items
2. The requirement to use additional PPE for certain procedures.
3. The requirement to leave the dental surgery empty for a period of time, following certain procedures, up to an hour, in some cases.

The key area of treatments which have been affected are the so called 'Aerosol Generating Procedures' (AGPs). These are procedures which produce a fine water spray. Examples of which are using the dental drill with water and the ultrasonic scaler, which is used for

cleaning teeth. This aerosol, when combined with a virus is a potential method for infecting other people. To reduce this risk, enhanced levels of PPE must be worn by the Dental Team when performing AGPs. At the end of the procedure the dental surgery must be left empty for a period of time. This is to allow any aerosol to settle on the surfaces, which can then be disinfected, in order to prevent cross- contamination. We will absorb the cost of this empty surgery time. The cost of the additional PPE for AGPs is around £30 per appointment (2 sets of masks, visors, gowns for Dentist/Hygienist and Nurse).

### **Treatments That Will Cost the Same as Before**

From the time we re-open we will **not** make any additional charges for standard PPE for procedures that do not generate an aerosol. Examples of these are check-ups, x-rays, temporary fillings and simple extractions. We will absorb that additional cost. Charges for these treatments will therefore be as before.

### **Treatments That will Currently Incur an Additional Charge**

We regret we will need to make a charge of **around £30 per appointment**, in addition to normal treatment fees, for the enhanced PPE required for AGPs. These are all the procedures that involve using a drill. Examples of these are fillings, root fillings, difficult extractions and treatment to relieve toothache. They also include the use of the ultrasonic scaler for tooth cleaning.

We will always discuss this additional cost with you before any appointment. We would hope that the requirement for this enhanced PPE will disappear as the risks associated with the COVID-19 pandemic lessen. When this happens, the charge will no longer apply. Patients also have the option of delaying treatment until after the requirement for enhanced PPE has passed. There is no timescale for this at present and delaying dental treatment may result in a less favourable outcome.