

FDI Statement

PROVISION OF ORAL HEALTH SERVICES CAN CONTINUE DURING COVID-19 BUT MUST COMPLY WITH OFFICIAL RECOMMENDATIONS AT A COUNTRY'S NATIONAL, SUB-NATIONAL OR LOCAL LEVEL

14 August 2020 (Geneva, Switzerland): FDI World Dental Federation publishes this statement in response to the release of World Health Organization's (WHO) *Considerations for the provision of essential oral health services in the context of COVID-19*, on 7 August.

Misinterpretation of the WHO document has led to widespread confusion and the circulation of inaccurate and misleading information in some media outlets. FDI and its member associations are committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of the communities and patients they serve. Contrary to recent media reports, people can safely visit the dentist and utilize oral health services, in the context of COVID-19, if a country's regulations permit this.

Within the considerations provided, WHO states that oral health services – including routine oral healthcare such as check-ups, dental cleanings, and preventive care – can continue during the COVID-19 pandemic, in those countries where there has been a sufficient reduction in transmission rates from community transmission to cluster cases. FDI considers the WHO publication as being a 'guidance' and not 'guideline' document, with a no 'one-size-fits all solution'. Therefore, official guidelines that are already in place at the national, sub-national or local level may vary and should be followed.

FDI reinforces that oral healthcare is essential to maintaining good overall health and routine care is necessary for the early detection, prevention, and control of oral diseases. FDI advocates that every opportunity should be utilized to reinforce oral health promotion and prevention messages to help reduce the need for avoidable dental visits. But at the same time governments must ensure continued and equitable access to essential oral healthcare services, as well as the availability of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), to avoid an even bigger burden on health systems in the future.

FDI and its approximately 200 member associations in 130 countries have put measures in place to ensure that patients and staff are adequately protected from infection risk to avoid viral transmission, such as:

1. screening and triaging patients;
2. implementing strict hand hygiene and disinfection measures;
3. ensuring the availability and correct use of PPE by all staff;
4. enforcing physical distancing and use of masks by patients in waiting rooms;
5. utilizing tele-dentistry for patient consultations;
6. carrying out stringent sterilization measures for all dental instruments, devices and equipment;
7. ventilating dental practices to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

Further research into the transmission of COVID-19, including specific considerations for dental practice, is of paramount importance so that recommendations evolve according to emerging evidence. Hence allowing the safest oral healthcare protocols to be implemented. FDI will contribute to this evidence base by publishing, very soon, key findings from a global survey gathering information from 92 national dental associations from 80 countries, with the objective of defining common strategies that have been effective in the prevention and control of COVID-19 within dental settings, globally.

[Keep up to date with all the latest science and research through FDI's COVID-19 resource library](#)
[Read WHO's Considerations for the provision of essential oral health services in the context of COVID-19](#)