

Covid Policy – Information for patients.

We would like to thank all our patients for their understanding and patience during the COVID pandemic. We would like to keep you informed as we are continually reviewing guidance on how to resume dental care for our patients.

This policy has been created based on multiple updated sources from within the dental and medical professions. It outlines modifications to our normal procedures that we employ since dental practices have been reopened after the initial COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. It is not known at this time whether these procedures are temporary or whether they will become a permanent feature of the way dental practices must be run to ensure patient and staff safety in the future.

New measures at the Mount to reduce risk of COVID-19 transmission

The cross-infection control protocols we implement at the Mount guards against all previously known pathogens and they are already woven into the fabric of our clinical activity. The difference with COVID 19 is that it is highly contagious and its ability to persist in the environment. This is particularly true when we are carrying out active dental treatments i.e. fillings, ultrasonic scaling etc. where an aerosol is produced that may persist in the surgery on completion.

To this end the changes will focus on:

- reducing footfall
- maintaining social distance between the people that visit us
- reducing the number of visits required for any treatment you need
- stagger the use of our surgeries to ensure we allow any aerosol to settle prior to surgery disinfection and seeing the next patient.

It should be remembered that a dental practice is already a very clean environment compared to public areas but that it is not possible for us to control sources of infection outside the dental practice. Please be assured that all our staff will also be complying with these procedures to reduce the risk of cross infection in both directions.

Before attending the practice

As mentioned above, we will carry out a pre-attendance assessment via a telephone conversation to assess relative coronavirus infection risk.

We kindly ask that you leave all non-essential belongings at home or in your car. Coats, bags, and particularly mobile phones can act as fomites (surfaces on which microorganisms may reside and can potentially be the cause of cross infection) in the transmission of COVID 19. If you do happen to bring your phone with you, we will kindly ask that you do not touch or use your phone within the practice.

Your appointments will be scheduled on the telephone, and in order to help maintain social distancing we will ask you to pre-pay for your treatment planned for the day. There will still be contactless payments available should you choose to purchase any oral hygiene products. This will greatly help limit your waiting time at the practice and help prevent the build-up of significant numbers of people together in our waiting area.

Travel

When travelling to the practice, we recommend that you limit your close contact with other members of the public as far as possible. If you can drive or be driven and picked up by somebody with whom you live, this would be ideal. Alternatively, we would recommend coming to the practice in a taxi, ideally a partitioned black cab so that you are separated from the driver. Please book cabs in advance as there may be a shortage due to this reason when businesses reopen.

Arriving at the practice

We would like to eliminate waiting times in reception as much as possible so we would ask you to:

- Arrive on time for your appointment
- When you arrive, we would like you to call us but remain waiting outside, or in your car, until a member of staff calls you.
- Please do not arrive late- we can normally accommodate late arrivals but in these strange times it is unlikely we will be able to see you.
- You will be asked to wear a facemask and bring a pen with you

As a practice we will aim to have a clinic room ready for you on your arrival, we do have a waiting room but capacity is restricted due to social distancing and will only be used as a last resort.

When you attend the practice, we will welcome you, ask you questions relating to your general health and digitally take your temperature. If your temperature is above 37.8°C, you would not be permitted to enter the practice and will be asked to return home and self-isolate as per current government guidelines. If your temperature is normal, we will ask you to thoroughly gel your hands with the antiseptic hand gel provided.

Please note the restrooms will not be available to prevent any cross contamination so please bear this in mind before your appointment.

Practice procedures

The Dental team will have spent time critically looking at every aspect of the practice with a view to removing all non-essential items in the open to reduce the number of objects that may act as fomites You will find that the practice may appear quite bare when you attend.

All clinical and common areas including door handles and surfaces will be regularly disinfected at set times using our surgery disinfectant. Doors will be left open where possible to reduce the need to touch door handles.

There will be an additional buffer period between patients for active treatment to allow:

- Any aerosols to settle
- Additional time for decontamination procedures
- To allow for any treatment overruns
- To allow preparation time for the next patient so that they do not need to wait in the reception area.

All future appointments will be made and confirmed by email or telephone to limit your time spent at reception.

Dental procedures

All dental staff will be upgrading their personal protective equipment in line with current recommendations and evidence including FFP2 and FFP3 masks, visors and protective clothing as appropriate. We apologise in advance for the necessary reduction in social interaction that this will necessitate. Whilst our garb may make us appear impersonal and distant, please be assured we are still the same friendly team underneath it all!

All patient -facing dental staff test twice weekly with lateral flow antigen testing kits to pick up any asymptomatic staff

and then report their results to Public Health England (PHE).

We are especially mindful that most dental treatments are aerosol-generating procedures (AGP's). It is almost impossible for us to carry out meaningful dental procedures without generation of some level of aerosol. Aerosol suspended in the air is a potential source of infection which we wish to keep to a minimum.

Currently the dental literature suggests:

- Our use of our normal high-volume suction reduces aerosol production by over 90%.
- The use of dental rubber dam for some procedures further reduces bio aerosols by a further 30 to 90%
- Our regular facemasks filter approximately 60% of remaining airborne particles.
- FFP2 and FFP3 masks filter 94% and 99% respectively of airborne particles in both directions (patient to clinician and clinician to patient).

We therefore feel that our normal dental procedures can be carried out with minimal risk with use of high-volume suction, dental dam and FFP2/FFP3 and, in high aerosol generating procedures such as hygienist visit for periodontal treatment.

You will be able to leave directly at the end of your appointment as payment and further appointments can be arranged remotely or in surgery.

Vulnerable groups

The general advice for groups that are shielding/clinically extremely vulnerable is to remain at home and delay any non-essential dental treatment. We intend to set aside dedicated time for vulnerable groups whereby we will shield those groups as much as we possibly can. We will accomplish this by thorough remote preoperative triage, allotting dedicated time in surgery and timing the appointments to allow minimal interaction with members of staff and other patients.

If you have an emergency, please call us as soon as possible in the day to allow a prompt response to your problem.

These are unusual and tough times for all of us, thank you for your patience!