

1. Do patients need to wear masks?

Yes, patients are always required to wear a mask in the dental office, except during the provision of care. The New Brunswick Department of Public Health states a community mask is required. As approved by the Pandemic Task Force, children under two are exempt from wearing masks, as are those with a medical conditions that prevents them from wearing a mask.

Possible exemptions from this requirement are the following:

- Patients who are receiving medical treatment or a service that requires the removal of a mask. In these cases, Public Health states they may remove the mask during the duration of the treatment or service only.
- People who, due to cognitive impairment, an intellectual disability, neurodevelopment disorder, or a severe mental health issue are unable to adhere to this requirement.
- Persons with severe skin conditions on the face or ears that are aggravated by wearing a mask
- Any person who is unconscious and unable to remove a mask
- Situations where a person is deaf or hard of hearing and relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expressions to communicate

These patients should be scheduled when physical distancing can be provided.

<https://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/h-s/pdf/MASK.pdf>

2. Do staff need to wear a mask?

Yes, staff need to wear a mask in all staff areas. Case reports from Ontario, Quebec and China have shown, based on tracking and follow-up, that where the routine wearing of masks was not part of protocols, staff-to-staff infections were common. Therefore, social areas within an office (staff rooms, lunch areas, shared offices) pose a higher risk for transmission of SARS COV-2.

3. Do children have to wear a mask?

Yes, all children over the age of two (2) are required to wear a community mask in the dental office, unless a medical condition prevents them from doing so.

4. Are Patients who claim to have a medical reason for not wearing a mask required to wear one?

As stated earlier, there may be some circumstances where patients have a medical condition preventing them from wearing a community mask.

These patients should be scheduled when physical distancing can be provided.

For more information please visit the Government of NB FAQ section

<https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/corporate/promo/covid-19.html#faq>

5. Is it necessary to carry out pre-screening of patients as well as screen on the day of the appointment?

The importance of screening cannot be over-emphasized. Screening helps to identify patients who are possibly infected with Covid-19 before they enter the clinic, receive care and possibly transmit the virus in the process. Pre-screening should be done prior to the office visit, as well as in office screening upon arrival. The active screening process must include COVID-19 symptoms and COVID-19 risk factors as well as a temperature check.

6. A staff member has a close contact who has COVID- 19 symptoms and is awaiting the results of their COVID 19 test. Should the staff member report to work?

Unless the employee has been advised by public health to self- isolate, the employee reports to work. The employee must continue to self- monitor for symptoms of COVID-19.

7. One of my staff has a cold and failed the screening. What should I do?

An employee with one symptom should call 811 for direction regarding testing. Employees with two or more symptoms are to self-isolate and call 811 for testing. The Province of New Brunswick has provided a symptom checker on their website here:

https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/ocmoh/cdc/content/respiratory_diseases/coronavirus/coronavirusexposure.html#/app/symptom-checker/guides/399/what-to-do

8. What about asymptomatic carriers who may be present for dental care?

The evidence for transmission of Covid-19 from asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic carriers is inconclusive. The NBDS COVID-19 Operational Plan outlines measures dental offices in NB need to take to mitigate the risks of transmission. With proper screening, additional PPE requirements and enhanced infection control, the risk of transmission will be reduced, but not eliminated. Dental HCP not comfortable with minimum requirements are encouraged to wear a higher level of PPE.

9. Is the NBDS performing site visits for dental practices this year?

The Peer Review Committee will schedule visits as directed by the board of the NBDS.

10. In open concept offices, are there spacing requirements between patients?

Physical distancing is required whenever masks are removed. In an open concept office, patients must be separated by 2 meters.

11. Can I reuse my N95 mask if I put a medical mask over top?

N95 respirators are designed to be single use, however, Health Canada has stated that *in times of limited supply and increased demand*, N95 respirators or their equivalents can be re-used. A used or expired respirator can still be effective at protecting a DHCP as long as the straps are not broken, the respirator is not soiled, and it can be fit tested. Wearing a surgical mask over the N95 or equivalent respirator provides protection from moisture contamination. A face shield would also provide a level of moisture contamination protection.

Government of Canada link for optimizing the use of masks and respirators:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/medical-devices/masks-respirators-covid19.html>

12. When using a three-way air water syringe, is water only considered an aerosol generating procedure?

No. Only when air is combined with water are aerosols generated when using a 3-way syringe. High volume evacuation should be used whenever possible when using the 3-way syringe.

13. I treated a patient in my office who subsequently tested positive for Covid-19. What precautions do I take?

In the event that the patient informs you they have tested positive to Covid-19, contact Public Health and seek guidance. In the event of a positive test for someone who has visited your office, Public Health will determine necessary measures and through their contact tracing procedures, your clinic will be notified. Follow the instructions given by Public Health and all staff must self-monitor.

14. A member of the staff has tested positive for Covid-19. What precautions do I take?

The employee must self-isolate and follow guidance from Public Health. Public Health will determine what action the dental office needs to take. This may involve providing a list of employees and patients who were present in the office during the exposure risk period so that appropriate contact tracing can begin. Public Health will advise the employer as to any workplace access restrictions as well as workplace cleaning and re-occupying procedures.

15. What precautions do I need to take when treating a patient who has screened or tested as Covid-19 positive?

For patients who are positive for Covid-19, in-person treatment **must** be deferred unless it is a life-threatening emergency. Patient assessment **must** take place remotely as a first line of care. Dentists are responsible for patient's dental care plan. (e.g. Prescription medication; referral to specialist; treatment within a hospital setting or treatment within your offices adhering to the same infection control guidelines and using enhanced PPE as outlined in the "Patients Who Screen Positive" section.)

Patients who have screened positive **should** be rescheduled. If the appointment cannot be deferred, treatment **should** be conducted in an enclosed treatment room with floor to ceiling walls or barriers and a door. If not possible, these patients **must** be scheduled at the end of the day or when other patients and non-essential staff are not present in the defined treatment area. Fallow times **should** be respected based on the air changes per hour for your office setting.

In addition to general precautions listed above, a fit tested N95 respirator (or equivalent as per Appendix F), gowns, head bonnets, face shield and eye protection, gloves **must** be worn.

16. What are some recommendations to manage lunch breaks, especially with a large staff?

It will be challenging to practice physical distancing in your office. Work with your team to develop a process for patient flow into and through the practice to encourage physical distancing and minimize interaction with other staff or patients.

Develop protocols to include:

- Wearing masks where physical distancing is not possible.
- Limiting the total number of people at the workplace and where they are assigned to work.
- Staggered start times, breaks, and lunches.
- Arrange lunchrooms and break rooms to follow physical distancing practices. Consider erecting partitions on lunchroom tables.
- Meals should minimize use of appliances. Any appliances used with high touch surfaces such as microwaves or refrigerators should be disinfected after use.

17. I am worried I may be required to work without the proper PPE or that my employer is not following the guidelines. What do I do?

No dental office employee can be required to work without the proper PPE as outlined in the Covid-19 Operational Plan for the Practice of Dentistry in the Province of New Brunswick. If you feel you are not being provided with proper PPE as outlined in this plan, we recommend that first and foremost, you should have a discussion with your employer. It is the responsibility of all clinics to follow the guidelines. If you feel you are being asked to work in an unsafe environment, you may contact the New Brunswick Dental Society or WorkSafe NB to have your concerns addressed.

18. Are there special precautions I should take before sending work to a dental lab?

Impressions, prostheses, or appliances should be cleaned and disinfected as soon as possible after removal from the patient's mouth, before drying of blood or other organic debris. The manufacturer's instructions regarding the stability of specific materials during disinfection should be consulted. Wet impressions or appliances should be placed in an impervious bag prior to transportation to a commercial dental laboratory.

Further information can be found in the NBDS Infection Control Guidelines Section 8 Dental Laboratory Asepsis on page 31.

19. We have a large staff. Are we permitted to have all of our staff on site?

There is no limit on the number of Dental Health Care Practitioners (DHCPs) in your office. Surgical masks must be worn at all times. You should have the appropriate number of staff required to effectively operate your office and provide care in a safe environment.

20. Can I use nitrous oxide and oxygen sedation?

Yes, you can use nitrous oxide and oxygen sedation when you return to work. The following precautions must be taken:

1. Use as low of flow as possible.
2. Ensure the circuit and nasal hood is appropriately reprocessed according to manufacturers' instructions.
3. Consider the use of disposable items (nasal hoods) when possible.
4. Disinfect the nitrous oxide and oxygen unit (including reservoir bag) appropriately between patients.

Resource: <https://ramedical.com/infection-control-guide-to-care-of-inhalation-sedation/>

21. What PPE is worn by a caregiver when accompanying a patient into a dental operatory?

It is recommended that other individuals should not be present in the operatory during patient care. If an individual such as a parent or other caregiver is present, then they must wear a mask and be 2 metres away from the patient. If this distance is not possible, then the individual must don the same PPE as the dental care providers. It is important that caregivers are not exposed to the patient's bacteria through spatter contamination.

22. I have a patient who is a truck driver transporting goods to New Brunswick from the United States and Western Canada. They say that they don't need to self-isolate for 14 days. Can I treat them without their need to self-isolate?

Please refer to the *PATIENTS WHO SCREEN POSITIVE* section in the operational plan. Triage and manage the oral health care needs of essential workers such as truckers by tele-dentistry whenever possible.

Public Health recently issued a news release regarding measures in place at the border:
https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/health/news/news_release.2020.10.0562.html

They also provide useful information here regarding individuals travelling or returning to New Brunswick for work purposes:

https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/ocmoh/cdc/content/respiratory_diseases/coronavirus/coronavirusexposure.html#/app/symptom-checker/guides/399/what-to-do

While Public Health guidelines state that these individuals are not required to self-isolate for 14 days, they must pass pre-screening and screening requirements to be treated in a dental office. The Chief Medical Officer of Health notes that screening protocols are the best control measure. It is recommended to perform non-aerosol generating procedures whenever possible for individuals with a self-isolation exemption. If an aerosol generating procedure is necessary, the office must follow the protocols as outlined in the Covid-19 Operational Plan. A fit tested N95 respirator (or equivalent as per Appendix F), gowns, head bonnets, face shield and eye protection, gloves **must** be worn. Please note that the "treatment space" extends out as far as the nearest closed walls/door.

23. My patient is from another province who must continue to access dental care at my office to finish treatment. What additional precautions do I take?

Individuals who are patients from another province who must continue access to medical care in NB are not required to [self-isolate](#).

<https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/corporate/promo/covid-19/travel.html>

It is recommended that only urgent and emergency treatment be considered. All other treatment should be deferred. If treatment is required patients should be treated as if they have screened positive and the necessary precautions followed (Recommendations in question 22)

24. My patient is an essential worker who is undergoing a modified self-isolation. What precautions should I take?

While practicing modified self-isolation, workers are able to access health care. If a worker needs to access such services during the modified self-isolation period, public health measures, such as masking and physical distancing, must be maintained.

https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/health/news/news_release.2020.10.0562.html

It is recommended that only urgent and emergency treatment be considered. All other treatment should be deferred. If treatment is required patients should be treated as if they have screened positive and the necessary precautions followed (Recommendations in question 22)

25. Can we still schedule a Christmas party or celebratory gathering for our office staff?

Dentists should use their own professional judgment when considering gatherings either inside or outside their office space for their staff and their spouses/families. A gathering of people indoors without social distancing and mask wearing can allow spread of Covid-19. The risk of transmission is higher as the number of people attending and the duration of the gathering increases. Follow Public Health guidelines at all times when considering a social event. The Chief Medical Officer of Health recently identified a gathering in Saint John as a 'super-spreader' event.

26. Can my office use an automated (email / text) pre-screening questionnaire as our initial patient contact two or three days prior to the patients scheduled appointment?

Automated prescreening (text/email) is allowed to 2-3 days in advance to screen patients.

Rationale: It is not always possible to reach patients the day before, especially if their appointment is on a Monday. Staff may not be able to delegate the time required to contact every patient by phone for screening. Point of care assessment and other protocols take priority.

27. We have some patients who do not have access to a vehicle and as a result will be required to wait in the parking lot during cold winter days. Can we allow these individuals to enter our waiting room for a short period in order to stay warm?

Dentists should use their professional judgement regarding the use of their waiting rooms. There may be times when a patient or accompanying caregiver needs to wait for a period of time inside your office. A space inside can be allocated for such a person as long as they can be distanced by 2 meters from staff or other patients. They must also wear a mask at all times while they wait and the contact areas where they are seated should be disinfected after they leave.