

Patient Guide on true emergency situations during COVID-19 pandemic

March 20, 2020

Advice on helping patients determine if their situation is truly an emergency

The NBDS strongly recommends that all non-essential dental services be suspended immediately. Treatment of emergency situations should continue.

What is a "true emergency situation"?

In dentistry, a "true emergency situation" includes:

- Oral-facial trauma: e.g. As result of a fall, car accident or blow to face that affects the teeth
- Significant infection: Swelling in the face and or throat related to dental issue, visible in mirror
- Prolonged bleeding: Bleeding doesn't stop even after applying pressure for 15-20 minutes
- Major pain: Pain which cannot be managed by over-the-counter medications.

What do I do if my situation does qualify as emergency care under the above criteria?

- Contact your dental office by telephone. You will likely need to leave a voice message as dental offices are mandated to be closed except to deal with emergencies.
- The dentist will call you back to discuss and assess your situation. He or she may prescribe you some medication if that is warranted.
- You must disclose any acute health issues such as cough, fever, respiratory illness, including COVID-19
- In rare circumstances where a phone consultation will not suffice, a clinical evaluation may be necessary.
- Your dentist will take all necessary precautions to stabilize your situation in a safe manner.

What questions will my dentist ask me?

- Do you have a fever, a cough or are you having difficulty breathing?
- Have you recently returned from a trip outside of Canada in the last 14 days?
- Have you been in direct contact with a person who has tested positive for Covid-19?
- Have you been in direct contact with someone who has a respiratory disease, who has recently returned to Canada from an affected region?

You must be truthful in your responses as this will assist your dentists in planning and properly overseeing your emergency treatment. In certain cases, it is possible that your dentist will need to refer your case to a colleague within the province for treatment.