

香港特別行政區政府
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THE GOVERNMENT OF THE HONG KONG
SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION
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Dear Dentists,

Update on COVID-19

Thank you very much for working together in the fight against the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 outbreak a global pandemic. To date, over seven million cases have been reported globally. The activities of COVID-19 in overseas countries remain high in general. In Hong Kong, as of 10 June 2020, a total of 1108 cases have been reported.

The Government of Hong Kong SAR has raised the response level under the “Preparedness and Response Plan for Novel Infectious Disease of Public Health Significance” to Emergency on 25 January 2020. Various anti-epidemic strategies and measures have been implemented since January.

All along, the Government has adopted effective containment strategy of early detection, swift contact tracing, prompt isolation and quarantine to prevent community outbreak. Currently, all asymptomatic inbound travellers arriving at the Hong Kong International Airport are subject to “test and hold” strategy and compulsory 14-day quarantine measure. This has enabled early identification of imported cases and minimized the risk of community transmission from imported cases. Coupled with social distancing and hygiene measures in the community, the number of local cases has decreased to a very low level in the past two months. However, two clusters of locally acquired cases with no apparent primary sources identified for the index cases were reported in May and early June this year. These clusters signify there might be silent/subclinical local transmission ongoing in the community. The risk of community outbreaks exists.

Clinical reports and studies have shown that there may be asymptomatic and presymptomatic persons who may unknowingly infect other people. Therefore, as healthcare professionals, we should continue to be vigilant but there is no cause for panic.

*We build a healthy Hong Kong and
aspire to be an internationally renowned public health authority*

In dentistry, it is very important to have high standard of infection control to safeguard the health of ourselves, staff, and patients. We would like to strongly recommend the dental profession to strictly adhere to the infection control principles and measures relevant to the dental practice as promulgated by the Centre for Health Protection (CHP). These include standard (universal) precautions and transmission-based precautions. Please observe hand hygiene and wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) which include face shields and surgical facemasks. Dental healthcare workers may consider using N95 respirators but they should wear them properly according to the CHP guidelines. For details, please refer to the following website of the CHP: <https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/resources/346/index.html>.

As saliva and respiratory droplets from infected patients may contain severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) and saliva can be aerosolized in dental aerosol generating procedures, additional measures are necessary.

For administrative control, one of the aims is to identify potentially infected cases by temperature measurement, checking signs and symptoms, and taking travelling, occupation, contact and cluster (TOCC) history. **Patients with fever, respiratory symptoms or other symptoms COVID-19 must be recommended to seek medical care immediately. Dental treatment should be limited to emergency treatment and no aerosol generating procedures should be provided to them.**

To reduce aerosol generation and remove contaminated aerosol, the following measures are highly recommended:

1. pre-procedural mouth rinse with antiseptic solution (such as povidone-iodine, hydrogen peroxide, chlorhexidine);
2. use of high volume suction;
3. rubber dam isolation (including split-dam technique) if applicable for aerosol generating procedures; and
4. using the 3-in-1 syringe with care.

In case that there are sustained community transmissions again, it is highly recommended to:

1. postpone all non-urgent treatment; and
2. suspend all aerosol generating procedures unless rubber dam isolation can be applied.

Thank you very much for your continuous support and collaborative effort to help in the prevention and control of infectious diseases.

Yours sincerely,



(Dr. Wiley LAM)
for Director of Health