

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON COVID19 & ORAL HEALTH

Questions	Answers
<p>Are people with oral health problems (such as tooth decay, gum diseases) more likely to get COVID-19?</p>	<p>There is no evidence for this at the moment. However, it is important to maintain good oral health to ensure good overall health in the context of COVID-19. Co-morbidities associated with poor oral health, such as diabetes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are associated with the development and progression of periodontal disease (gum diseases). • people with diabetes are more likely to have serious complications and become seriously ill from COVID-19.
<p>How safe are dental / primary care clinics in the context of COVID-19?</p>	<p>Dental / Primary care clinics are considered to pose a risk of COVID-19 transmission, because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Symptomatic, pre-symptomatic or asymptomatic COVID-19 patients can infect others. Therefore, persons infected with COVID-19 virus but not showing any symptom of COVID-19 (e.g. fever and cough, shortness of breath) can infect others while visiting the dental/primary care clinics. ○ Dental/Primary care clinics may increase the risk of getting COVID-19 because there may be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • direct transmission through inhalation of droplets that are generated through coughing or sneezing of COVID-19 patients; • direct transmission via exposure of eye, nasal or oral mucosa to infectious droplets; • indirect transmission via touching contaminated surfaces in the clinics; • an infection risk from oral health care procedures using equipment such as high-speed drills and ultrasonic scalers which are aerosol-generating procedures. Such oral health care procedures cause significant droplet spray and aerosols that can rapidly contaminate surfaces and spread infection.
<p>Can people go to the dental /primary care clinics to seek routine oral health care in the context of COVID19?</p>	<p>It is advised to postpone non-urgent oral health care, such as dental checkups and professional cleaning, to prevent the risk of transmission of COVID-19 virus to others and the possibility of becoming infected by COVID-19 virus in the dental / primary care clinics*.</p>
<p>If people have an oral health problem (such as toothache) in the context of COVID-19, is it possible to visit dental/primary care centers?</p>	<p>Yes, people should seek the necessary care. However, should not go to the dental / primary care clinic directly without calling in advance. There is need to reduce the risk of getting/transmission of COVID-19.</p> <p>People should follow these simple rules before visiting a dental/primary care clinic*:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ contact nearby dental / primary care clinic (e.g. by phone) and obtain a remote consultation with oral health care professionals such as dentists / primary care workers who will assess remotely whether people need urgent / emergency care in a clinic, or if medication may help; ○ if the remote tele-consultation identifies an emergency or urgent clinical situation, people should be instructed on how to get help as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The dentist may refer people to a special care facility through a triage unit or people may get an appointment with their routine provider.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency or urgent situations comprise an acute oral infection, significant or prolonged bleeding, severe pain that cannot be controlled with pain-killers or dental/oro-facial trauma.
<p>Can people maintain good oral health (like preventing dental caries, and gum diseases) in the context of COVID-19?</p>	<p>Yes, people can self-maintain a good oral health by following simple advice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ choose a well-balanced diet that is low in sugars and high in fruit and vegetables. ○ limit consumption of sugar sweetened beverages such as fizzy drinks, and soft drinks (water is best); ○ avoid all forms of tobacco, including chewing of hard nuts (e.g. areca nuts); ○ reduce the consumption of alcoholic drinks; ○ maintain good oral hygiene by brushing teeth with a fluoride-containing toothpaste twice a day.

*The local rules and regulations on oral health care may change depending on the context of COVID-19. Therefore, people should inquire with the dental/primary care clinics or local authorities about the local regulations so that people are informed about their options.

For more general information on COVID-19 and, Oral health please visit the following websites:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

<https://www.afro.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus-covid-19>

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/oral-health>

<https://www.afro.who.int/health-topics/oral-health>