Click to view the webinar!

The following pages will also show all of the media coverage that PDA initiated and received during the course of the pandemic, from March through July of 2020.
March 25, 2020

WPXI News 11

_Dentists unable to treat patients after Pennsylvania’s new COVID-19 mandate_

[https://www.wpxi.com/news/top-stories/dentists-unable-to-treat-patients-after-pennsylvanias-new-covid-19-mandate/NRQGYEKZU5EDJ12QRI0OWJMNJQ/?fbclid=IwAR2WwO96PmATuKw5rUFMsUrWigUtHWJuTnPnAxe8FkZYKDVS-vGX-LA](https://www.wpxi.com/news/top-stories/dentists-unable-to-treat-patients-after-pennsylvanias-new-covid-19-mandate/NRQGYEKZU5EDJ12QRI0OWJMNJQ/?fbclid=IwAR2WwO96PmATuKw5rUFMsUrWigUtHWJuTnPnAxe8FkZYKDVS-vGX-LA)

_WTAG in Altoona

Local dentist says he was ‘blindsided’ by PA Department of Health’s recent order


Pittsburgh Tribune-Review

_Western Pa. dentists upset about state order to stop emergency surgeries_


Senator Scott Martin, website


March 27, 2020

Johnstown Tribune

_PDF on page 2, featuring Dr. Michael Gress_

_Emergency dental care now allowed under updated Pa. COVID-19 guidelines_


March 31, 2020

WNEP

_Article featuring Dr. Maria Tacelosky_


April 10, 2020

TV interview with Dr. Tauberg - KDKA Pittsburgh


April 30, 2020

ADA’s Dr. Kathy O’Loughlin on NPR


May 5, 2020

Sunbury Daily Item

_Dental clinic still serving the Valley during pandemic_

Revised policy allows dentists to reopen practices

BY RANDY GRIFFITH
RGGRIFFITH@TRIBDEM.COM

A Health Department action Thursday afternoon appears to have resolved a situation that shut down emergency dental procedures across the state this week.

Thursday’s action relaxes guidelines instituted Monday to control the risk of spreading coronavirus.

Johnstown dental surgeon Michael Gress contacted The Tribune-Democrat on Wednesday morning to share the plight of dentists and their patients.

When the state told hospitals to stop elective procedures, it meant dentists could only do emergency procedures, such as treating a severe toothache or infected abscess.

But the rules, which were based on Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines, required all procedures to be done in “negative pressure” rooms with air filters. The set-up draws the air out of the procedure room and captures airborne microorganisms.

All those in the room would be required to wear high-tech N95 masks, which are in short supply across the nation.

“There is no dentist in the state with a negative pressure room,” Gress said.

His attempts to get the N95 masks were not successful. One company predicted delivery in mid-May at the earliest.

The state policy was approved Sunday.

Gress began calling patients Monday to cancel procedures.

That meant people with severe toothaches were continuing to wait for relief.

Gress is a member of the Pennsylvania Dental Association, which contacted the Health Department and Gov. Tom Wolf to negotiate a less restrictive policy.

“We have confirmed that even the dental schools don’t have negative pressure engineering controls,” the association wrote to the state.

“This guidance will effectively shut down most, if not all, dental facilities and offices. Patients needing emergency care will flood hospitals’ emergency rooms, the very place we do not want them to go.’”

Gress said that had not happened yet in Johnstown, but expected the hospital would call him to do the emergency procedure, anyway.

Health Secretary Dr. Rachel Levine was asked about the situation during Thursday’s press briefing.

“We’ve come up with some new draft policies that I’ll be discussing with the dental experts this afternoon,” Levine said.

“We’ll have a report that, hopefully, we can release tomorrow.”

Responding to the newspaper’s request, her office emailed the new policy document to The Tribune-Democrat just after 4:30 p.m. Thursday. Gress was provided a copy.

The revised policy requires the N95 mask only for patients with COVID-19 diagnosis or symptoms.

All other procedures are permitted with the standard personal protection equipment used by dentists.

“It seems to be common sense,” Gress said. “If a patient is not suspected of having coronavirus, then it’s appropriate to treat them on an emergency basis.”

The dental association president responded on its Facebook page.

“Now dentists in Pennsylvania can provide emergency dental care to patients who have been suffering with severe pain and swelling, or those who have had traumatic injuries to their teeth as a result of accidents, without the requirement to use negative pressure rooms which are not available in dental offices, hospitals, public health facilities, or dental schools,” association President Charles Incalcaterra said.

“We look forward to communicating regularly with the Department of Health as this crisis unfolds.”

Gress said he expected to resume work immediately.

“This is good news,” he said.

“Now I can see the pile of patients that has backed up.”

Randy Griffith covers health care for The Tribune-Democrat. Follow him on Twitter @photogriFFis7.
**May 8, 2020**

Priscilla Liguori from ABC27 did a live shot in front of our building as a lead-in to her story during their early morning newscast. She also has posted a second piece of video – of her interview with Dr. Tauberg that she did on Thursday – on ABC27 Facebook and her social media. It looks like she also interviewed Sen. Scott Martin, who has been a big supporter of us, although that was just included in the website story and not in video.

Here are some links:

https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=231340044839355

https://www.facebook.com/PriscillaNews/photos/a.528178820906395/1306530223071247/?type=3&theater

**May 15, 2020**

Featuring Penn Dental Medicine Dean Mark S. Wolff and Dr. James Tauberg


*PDF on page 4-5.*

**May 17, 2020**

Featuring Dr. John Waldman


*PDF on page 6.*

**May 28, 2020**

Featuring Dr. Carl Jenkins


**May 29, 2020**

Featuring Dr. James Tauberg


**June 10, 2020**

WITF Smart Talk


PCN Coronavirus Impact

TV interview with Dr. Tauberg, begins at 22:46 of this link

https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=956939431406571&ref=watch_permalink

**July 19, 2020**

WHYY Philadelphia


*We will continue to update this list as new articles are obtained.*
Dental appointments depend on several factors

Pa. Health Dept. did not give the go-ahead for return to routine work.

By Nick Vadala  
STAFF WRITER

Need a dentist? Pennsylvania dentists may be able to help, thanks to updated guidance from the commonwealth's Department of Health — though there are some stipulations.

Before the update, dentists were only allowed to help with emergency dental issues. But now, as long as procedures can be done safely, that limitation has been removed.

"We do not want to create additional public health needs after the pandemic related to dental issues," Health Secretary Rachel Levine said. "By taking appropriate precautions, dentists across Pennsylvania can provide necessary public health treatments in a safe and effective way."

So, can you go see a dentist right now? Yes, but an in-office visit depends on several factors, and the decision is up to your provider.

Here is what you need to know.

It's not business as usual

While the new guidelines allow for more dental work, the Health Department did not give the go-ahead for the return to routine dentistry — but there is also no list of approved procedures. Instead, providers "should apply their clinical judgment" when deciding whether to perform a procedure.

"If we evaluate a patient and determine that the lack of treatment would result in irreversible damage, then that clinician should pursue that treatment with the appropriate level of [personal protective equipment]," said Dr. James Tauberg, president of the Pennsylvania Dental Association. "It gives us a certain flexibility to use our ability as doctors to make that judgment."

So, some procedures may be put off until the pandemic slows down. If you don't have a dentist, you may be stuck: some offices are only seeing current patients, so you may have to check around.

What dentists need to consider

Dentists are supposed to consider the prevalence of COVID-19 cases in their area, the needs of patients and staff, and whether they have enough PPE. Dental practices are not currently prioritized for PPE distribution in Pennsylvania, and have to get the equipment on their own, according to the Health Department.

"If you don't have the appropriate PPE, they're basically telling you that you defer the care completely — meaning, don't do anything — or try to refer it to someplace that maybe has it," Tauberg said.

And dentists are only supposed to perform "non-aerosolizing" procedures — or treatments that do not "create a visible spray that contains large particle droplets of water" unless an "aerosol generating" procedure is necessary "as a last resort," the DOH says. The coronavirus is thought to be able to spread through aerosols, according to the CDC, and many dental procedures, especially those that require dental drills, produce an aerosol, Tauberg said.

Expect to be screened

Dental offices will start by interviewing you over the phone or by video chat, based on the DOH's guidance. That, Tauberg said, is the "new reality of dentistry," and will likely stick around "well past the COVID-19 crisis."

During the call, they will ask you about your symptoms and your possible exposure to the coronavirus, said Penn Dental Medicine Dean Mark S. Wolff. You will likely be asked health-related questions about having had a recent loss of smell or taste, any fever within the last 14 days, and whether you have had recent contact with anyone known to have had the coronavirus.

"All of those things are reasons why you shouldn't see the dentist unless you have a significant and potentially life-threatening dental item," Wolff said. "Our goal is never to bring somebody in who is highly likely to have had the disease unless it is an absolute emergency — and those patients need to be treated in hospitals."

Care is case by case

While many procedures can be done safely, Wolff said, the better question is, "Should they be done, and should they be done now?" So, if you're thinking about going to the dentist, you should consider...
whether you need treatment right now or if you can wait.

"If you have great teeth, you're not the cleaning I need to do. I need to fit in the cleaning on the patient that does have gum disease and is going to break down," Wolff said. "We have to get patients out of pain. We have to take care of deep decay that will become a root canal if we don't take care of it."

Tauberg agreed, and said that you need to think about whether you can put off treatment for the time being. If a procedure can be put off without causing "irreversible damage," the Health Department indicates, dentists can provide care through teledentistry, as "patients might be able to be treated virtually with antibiotics and pain medication."

"They're telling us, 'Look, if you can, try not to treat the patient. If you can treat them with teledentistry and antibiotics, you should still do that," Tauberg said. "It's all about asking us as doctors to be doctors."

**What to expect if you go**

Should you get an in-person appointment, don't expect the visit to be the same as past trips to the dentist.

As per the DOH, you should wear a mask when you're not being treated, frequently wash your hands, and maintain social distancing in the office. Practices, Wolff said, must also up their safety and cleanliness regimens.

"Your dentist should always be wearing a mask. Your dentist should never be shaking your hand," he said. "If my school smelled like you were walking into a swimming pool because of all the Clorox and cleaning, I wouldn't feel bad about that."

And the days of packed waiting rooms are over. You may be told to wait in your cars, not bring anyone with you, and not come early to an appointment.

You'll also likely have your temperature taken. Some offices, like those at Penn, Wolff added, will check in with you again 48 hours after your appointment to monitor for any potential symptoms.

"We're into a little bit of a new unknown for fear of this virus," Tauberg said. "We're being a very, very cautious group. We have to make sure we use our knowledge and keep everybody safe."

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**Dentist Sabrine Jendoubi**

Jendoubi inspects the teeth of a patient in Paris. In Pennsylvania, dentists were only allowed to help with emergencies, but a Department of Health upgrade has removed that limitation.
Dental offices
His very clean dental office is going to get even cleaner to reopen

By Patricia Sabatini
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Pittsburgh dentist and prostodontist Dr. John Waldman was never quite comfortable with his practice’s designation as a nonessential business.

“Gun shops are open, and you can go fishing,” he said with a chuckle. “Dental offices are probably one of the cleaner places around. We sterilize everything.”

For roughly eight weeks, dentists in the state have been limited to handling emergencies. Dr. Waldman has taken one. But as Allegheny County moved into the “yellow” phase of Gov. Tom Wolf’s reopening plan Friday, dentists in the region got the green light to begin taking patients again.

Still, it won’t be back to business as usual.

“We already had a clean, sterile environment, but now we are upping it a notch” with guidance from the Pennsylvania Dental Association and Centers for Disease Control to help prevent infections with the novel coronavirus, Dr. Waldman said.

In addition to their normal masks and fluid-resistant disposable gowns, Dr. Waldman and his staff will be wearing face shields, hair bonnets and possibly booties for their shoes.

He is also adding special portable air purifiers in each patient room at his Downtown and Squirrel Hill offices, high-speed vacuum suction devices for patients’ mouths that emit less spray, and plexiglass partitions at the front desks similar to those in grocery stores.

Patients also will have to get used to new safety procedures, including undergoing temperature checks, filling out a questionnaire that screens for possible exposure to the virus, sanitizing their hands and swishing their mouths with a germ-killing pre-rinse.

“We will be treating everyone as if they have the virus,” Dr. Waldman said.

Since staff will be changing their protective gear more often, dentists across the state have been mulling the possibility of having patients pay a $10 to $15 surcharge to cover the extra costs, Dr. Waldman said.

“Insurance probably is not going to reimburse us,” he said.

He hasn’t estimated how much business he’s lost during the state’s lockdown, but he is sure many of his patients are relieved that his practice is reopening.

“I do a lot of reconstruction and cosmetic work,” he said. “I have a lot of people in the middle of treatment getting along with missing teeth or interim appliances.

“They’re anxious to get in and get it done.”

Thanks to a $30,000 loan under the federal Paycheck Protection Program secured through Citizens Bank, Dr. Waldman was able to pay his rent during the shutdown. He also was able to call back his four-person staff on May 6 to begin cleaning, organizing and rescheduling canceled appointments.

While he’s “anxious to get back and start helping people again,” he doesn’t expect to start seeing patients until the end of May or the first week of June.

At first, “We won’t be seeing as many patients in a day,” he said. “I want to get the routine perfect.”

For now, Dr. Waldman’s biggest worry is whether his patients will feel safe enough to return.

“One thing I’ve learned over the years is if a patient is going to cancel an appointment, the first thing they will cancel is a dental appointment,” he said.

“There’s talk on dental blogs that patients will not want to come back. Hopefully, we will win people back. I have a feeling we will be OK.”

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Prosthodontist and dentist
Dr. John L. Waldman