



Oral Health

September is Dental Infection Control Awareness Month (DICAM)



Oral health care is an essential service and maintaining good oral health is critical to overall health. CDC's Division of Oral Health provides guidelines and recommendations to reduce transmission of infections in dental healthcare settings.

There are many ways that dental health care personnel work to keep their patients, their community, and themselves safe during a dental visit. September is [Dental Infection Control Awareness Month](#) (DICAM)—a time to recognize and raise awareness of these critical guidelines that dental health care personnel follow every day.

The theme of this year's awareness is "Staying in the Know Together." What are you doing to educate your patients about infection prevention and control in your practice?

Your patients may be more curious than ever to hear about what you do to keep them safe during their visits. Don't wait for them to ask; they may be too shy. Instead, here are some ways you can start the conversation, along with resources to help:

CDC's Coronavirus Resources

CDC's [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) website provides extensive information and resources for many audiences including healthcare personnel, communities, health departments and the public. Dental health care personnel should follow CDC's [Guidance for Healthcare Personnel](#). Refer to these guidelines on a regular basis to ensure you are staying up to date on any changes.

Hand Hygiene

Practicing [hand hygiene](#) is a simple yet effective way to prevent infections. Cleaning your hands can prevent the spread of germs, including those that are resistant to antibiotics and are becoming difficult, if not impossible, to treat. Educate your patients about the importance of handwashing, and how you do this before, in-between, and after seeing patients. You can also teach your patients the importance of keeping their own hands clean, especially as we move into flu season. This may help patients feel more comfortable and relaxed.

Dental Unit Waterlines

Dental unit waterlines can introduce risk of illness to staff and patients if water is not appropriately treated. Explain to your patients how you [maintain the quality](#) of your dental water, and find answers to frequently asked questions [here](#).

Instrument Sterilization

[Instrument reprocessing](#) requires multiple steps by trained staff using specialized equipment to ensure proper cleaning, disinfection, and sterilization, and storage has occurred. Talk with your patients about the safety measures you take regarding your dental equipment before and after each visit.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

[Personal protective equipment](#), or PPE, should be used whenever there is an expectation of possible exposure to infectious material. CDC's [Guidance for Healthcare Personnel](#) includes recommendations for implementing universal use of PPE during the COVID-19 pandemic. Educate your patients about what PPE you use in dental settings; and why you wear your masks, gloves, gowns, and goggles.

Vaccinations

It is important for everyone to stay up to date on their vaccines to protect themselves, their families, and their patients. But it is also important to remember that dentists and hygienists and assistants are healthcare providers — which means you are behavioral models and trusted messengers on health.

CDC recommends that everyone is vaccinated against COVID-19, and you can play an important part in changing attitudes.

Be an Infection Control Champion even after DICAM is over by continuing to have these important conversations all year round with your patients!

More Information

[Infection Control in Dental Settings](#)

[Hand Hygiene](#)

[Dental Unit Water Quality](#)

[Personal Protective Equipment](#)

[Sterilization](#)

[Recommended Vaccines for Healthcare Workers](#)

[Dental Infection Control Awareness Month Resources](#) 