Infectious Diseases in the News:
2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)

Prevention of 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) in the Dental Healthcare Setting
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides important and up-to-date information to the public and healthcare providers on the status of reported cases of 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) across the United States. Initial cases were reported in Wuhan, China and it is currently thought that the most likely mode of transmission is human to human. There are several reports of transmission from an asymptomatic person with the infection, so there remains much to be learned about how 2019-nCoV spreads.

On Feb. 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially named the disease COVID-19.

Dentists are urged to view the CDC 2019-nCoV situation summary web page for current insight (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/summary.html). Frequently Asked Questions (addressed down below) from dental providers about the virus include:

1. What to do if a patient presents for routine treatment and has acute respiratory symptoms with or without fever?
2. What to do if a patient with acute respiratory symptoms requires urgent dental care?
3. What to do if staff report to work with acute respiratory symptoms?
4. Where can I find current, credible information?

Overview
Prevention of Disease Transmission in the Dental Healthcare Setting
Patients with an acute respiratory illness may present for dental treatment at outpatient dental settings. The primary infection control goal is to prevent transmission of disease. Early detection of a suspected or confirmed case of 2019-nCoV and prompt isolation will reduce the risk of transmission. CDC recommends a multi-step approach that begins before the patient arrives at the practice and includes guidance regarding their arrival and complete duration of the affected patient’s presence in the practice.

Infection control issues during patient assessment:
- Patients with an acute respiratory illness should be identified at check-in and placed in a single-patient room with the door kept closed.
- Seek to prevent the transmission of respiratory infections in healthcare settings by adhering to respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette infection control measures at the first point of contact with any potentially infected person (https://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/resphygiene.htm)
- Offer a disposable surgical mask to persons who are coughing; and provide tissues and no-touch receptacles for used tissue disposal.
- Ill persons should wear a surgical mask when outside the patient room.
- Dental healthcare personnel assessing a patient with influenza-like or other respiratory illness should wear disposable surgical facemask*, non-sterile gloves, gown, and eye protection (e.g., goggles) to prevent exposure. Since recommendations may change as additional information becomes available it’s a good idea to check the CDC website for 2019-nCoV updates at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control.html
- Patient and dental healthcare workers should perform hand hygiene (e.g., hand washing with non-antimicrobial soap and water, alcohol-based hand rub, or antiseptic handwash) after possible contact with respiratory secretions and contaminated objects/materials.
Frequently Asked Questions

1) What to do if a patient presents for routine treatment and has acute respiratory symptoms with or without fever?

If the dentist suspects the illness could be due to 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) with the patient reporting travel to China or close contact with someone who has been to China and has symptoms that can include mild to severe respiratory illness with fever, cough, and shortness of breath, elective dental treatment should be deferred and the patient should be advised to contact their general health care provider. The health care provider will determine whether testing or treatment is needed. At this time, CDC reports that symptoms of 2019-nCoV may appear two-to-14 days after exposure.

Notify your local or state health department immediately if you suspect a patient may have the novel coronavirus, 2019-nCoV. Contact information for local health departments is available from the National Association of County Health Officials (NACHO) at https://www.naccho.org/membership/lhd-directory; the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) maintains a webpage with contact information for state health departments at https://www.cste.org/page/EpiOnCall.

2) What to do if a patient with acute respiratory symptoms requires urgent dental care?

If urgent dental care is required and 2019-nCoV has either been confirmed or is suspected, the care should be provided in a facility (e.g., hospital with dental care capabilities) with a minimum of 6 air changes per hour.

For aerosol-generating procedures, use an airborne infection isolation room or a procedure room with negative pressure air handling. Limit personnel engaged during the procedure to only those who are essential for patient care and procedural support. Personnel providing direct patient care for suspected or confirmed 2019-nCoV cases should wear a fit-tested NIOSH-certified disposable N95 respirator when entering the patient room and when performing dental procedures. Respirator use should be in the context of a complete respiratory protection program in accordance with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations. Information on respiratory protection programs and fit test procedures is available at www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/respiratory.

3) What to do if staff report to work with acute respiratory symptoms?

- Staff experiencing influenza-like-illness (ILI) (fever with either cough or sore throat, muscle aches) should not report to work.
- Staff who experience ILI and wish to seek medical care should contact their health care providers to report illness (by telephone or other remote means) before seeking care at a clinic, physician’s office, or hospital.
- Staff who have difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, or are believed to be severely ill, should seek immediate medical attention.
4) Where can I find current, credible information?
CDC’s website includes numerous resources for healthcare workers including:

Summary
Respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette infection control measures along with contact precautions are currently recommended for preventing transmission of 2019-nCoV in a dental healthcare setting. CDC continues to monitor activity relating to 2019-nCoV and is coordinating efforts with health departments in Arizona, California, Illinois, Massachusetts, Washington, and Wisconsin and communicating with the World Health Organization. This is an evolving situation and CDC is updating its guidance and information as it becomes available.