

# Coronavirus, what the Dental Hygienist needs to know

**Update – Feb 4, 2020**

Please note that this advice may change as more information becomes available.

Like most Canadians, dental hygienists have heard about the existence of a new ‘coronavirus’ which originated in China in the early days of 2020. We understand that dental hygienists are concerned about their own health and safety as well as that of their clients and families. BCDHA will continue to monitor this situation and we encourage all dental hygienists to check our website [www.bcdha.com](http://www.bcdha.com) for updates or information.

An increase in case counts around the world of the novel **coronavirus (2019-nCoV)** is not unexpected. The ease and extent of human-to-human transmission is still to be determined. The goal of the public health response to this emerging respiratory virus remains early detection and containment, until otherwise advised. At this time, the overall risk to Canadians is considered low. Canada has several standard border measures in place to prevent the introduction and spread of communicable diseases into Canada.<sup>1</sup>

## **KEY MESSAGES for Dental Hygienists:**

1. The number of confirmed 2019-nCoV cases reported from China and abroad has increased substantially, with recognized human-to-human transmission. However, the risk to British Columbians remains low at this time.<sup>2</sup>
2. Apply standard infection control protocols for all patients seen in the dental setting.<sup>1</sup>
3. Commonly used disinfectants are considered effective and sufficient.<sup>1</sup>
4. An N95 respirator is currently only recommended during suspected 2019-nCoV infection and during procedures when droplets or aerosols are expected. It is not recommended for any dental services to be provided during a known or suspected 2019nCoV infection.<sup>1</sup>
5. Illnesses associated with the new coronavirus are like several respiratory illnesses and include fever, dry cough, sore throat and headache. Most cases are considered mild to moderate with a subset experiencing more severe illness with shortness of breath and difficulty breathing.<sup>3</sup>
6. Primary care providers including dental hygienists, are asked to do passive and active screening.  
It is recommended that you or the staff:
  - a. Screen patients over the phone before scheduling appointments.
  - b. Post signs in your reception area asking patients with symptoms to identify themselves.

## **Sample screening**

Is the patient presenting with:

Fever, new onset of the cough or difficulty breathing AND any of the following:

- Travel to Hubei Province, China in the 14 days before the onset of illness  
OR
- Close contact with a confirmed or probable case of 2019-nCoV  
OR
- Close contact with a person with acute respiratory illness who has been to or from Hubei Province, China in the 14 days before their symptoms

**If a patient screens positive by phone:**

- Take a clinical history and travel/exposure assessment by phone to determine if the patient is a Person Under Investigation (PUI)
- Advise patient to contact their medical doctor or to call 8-1-1 (Health Link BC)
- Reschedule dental appointment

**If a patient screens positive at the dental office:**

- Maintain a 2-metre distance from the patient and wear a procedure mask
- Isolate the patient and, if possible, have them wear a procedure mask
- Take a clinical history and travel/exposure assessment to determine if the patient is a Person Under Investigation (PUI)
- Contact medical doctor, local public health unit or call 8-1-1

**If the patient has travelled to or from Hubei Province, China in the last 14 days but has no symptoms:**

- Advise the patient to watch for symptoms. If they develop Fever, new onset of the cough or difficulty breathing, they should call their primary care provider, local public health unit or dial 8-1-1
- Reschedule dental appointment

Continue your usual activities, processes and protocols.

**REFERENCES:**

1. Infection prevention and control during health care when novel coronavirus (nCoV) infection is suspected: interim guidance, updated January 25, 2020. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2020 (WHO/2019-nCoV/IPC/v2020.2; [https://www.who.int/publications-detail/infection-prevention-and-control-during-health-care-when-novel-coronavirus-\(ncov\)-infection-is-suspected-20200125](https://www.who.int/publications-detail/infection-prevention-and-control-during-health-care-when-novel-coronavirus-(ncov)-infection-is-suspected-20200125), accessed 27 January 2020).
2. Smith, N. January 25, 2020 Update: Expansion of 2019 novel coronavirus [Internet]. E-mail to Wendy Jobs ([wjobs@bcdha.com](mailto:wjobs@bcdha.com)) 2020 January 27 [cited 2020 Jan 27].
3. Information on novel coronavirus. Vancouver: BC Centre for Disease Control; 25 January 2020. (Available at <http://www.bccdc.ca/about/news-stories/stories/2020/information-on-novel-coronavirus>, accessed 27 January 2020).

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:**

[WHO](#)

[US CDC](#)

[Public Health Agency of Canada](#)

Dial 8-1-1 HealthLink BC: 8-1-1 is a free-of-charge provincial health information and advice phone line available in BC.

Contact your local health unit.

[Provincial Infection Control Network of BC \(PICNet\)](#)

[BCCDC](#)

[BC MINISTRY OF HEALTH](#)

[Health Link BC](#)

BCDHA members can also reach out to Wendy Jobs, BCDHA Manager of Dental Hygiene Practice at [wjobs@bcdha.com](mailto:wjobs@bcdha.com) or 250-960-0424.

# Coronavirus, what the Dental Hygienist needs to know

January 28, 2020

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## KEY MESSAGES for Dental Hygienists:

7. The number of confirmed 2019-nCoV cases reported from China and abroad has increased substantially, with recognized human-to-human transmission. However, the risk to British Columbians remains low at this time.<sup>2</sup>
8. Apply standard precautions for all patients seen in the dental setting.<sup>1</sup>
9. Commonly used disinfectants are considered effective and sufficient.<sup>1</sup>
10. An N95 respirator is currently only recommended during suspected 2019-nCoV infection and during procedures when droplets or aerosols are expected.<sup>1</sup>
11. Illnesses associated with the new coronavirus are like several respiratory illnesses and include fever, dry cough, sore throat and headache. Most cases are considered mild to moderate with a subset experiencing more severe illness with shortness of breath and difficulty breathing.<sup>3</sup>
12. Include questions to patients such as:
  - Have you been experiencing any flu like symptoms (fever and acute respiratory illness with history of travel to Hubei Province (where Wuhan City is located) in the 14 days prior to symptom onset?
  - Have you been in close contact with someone who was ill and had recently travelled to affected areas of China?
13. If a practitioner suspects that a patient might be at risk of 2019-nCoV infection, they should discontinue any clinical procedures and recommend that the patient attend the nearest emergency room. Advise the patient to inform health care staff of the possibility of 2019-nCoV infection immediately on reaching the health care facility.

## REFERENCES:

4. Infection prevention and control during health care when novel coronavirus (nCoV) infection is suspected: interim guidance, updated January 25, 2020. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2020 (WHO/2019-nCoV/IPC/v2020.2; [https://www.who.int/publications-detail/infection-prevention-and-control-during-health-care-when-novel-coronavirus-\(ncov\)-infection-is-suspected-20200125](https://www.who.int/publications-detail/infection-prevention-and-control-during-health-care-when-novel-coronavirus-(ncov)-infection-is-suspected-20200125), accessed 27 January 2020).
5. Smith, N. January 25, 2020 Update: Expansion of 2019 novel coronavirus [Internet]. E-mail to Wendy Jobs ([wjobs@bcdha.com](mailto:wjobs@bcdha.com)) 2020 January 27 [cited 2020 Jan 27].
6. Information on novel coronavirus. Vancouver: BC Centre for Disease Control; 25 January 2020. (Available at <http://www.bccdc.ca/about/news-stories/stories/2020/information-on-novel-coronavirus>, accessed 27 January 2020).

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

WHO: <https://www.who.int/westernpacific/emergencies/novel-coronavirus>

US CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Public Health Agency of Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html>

Dial 8-1-1 HealthLink BC: 8-1-1 is a free-of-charge provincial health information and advice phone line available in BC.

Contact your local health unit.

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