

Spires Dental Clinic

Post-COVID-19 return to work policy

This policy has been created based on multiple updated sources from within the dental and medical professions and direct feedback from all members of Spires Dental Clinic. It outlines modifications to our normal procedures that we intend to employ once dental practices can be reopened after the COVID-19 pandemic peak of infection has subsided.

It is not known at this time whether these procedures are temporary or whether they will become a permanent feature of the way dental practices must be run to ensure patient and staff safety in the future. The worldwide COVID-19 pandemic is still being evaluated and studied and policies and recommendations are likely to change in line with new scientific evidence over time.

We would like to thank all our patients for their patience and forbearance during this long period of practice closure and for their understanding and cooperation whilst we implement new measures at the practice.

Provisional timetable

At this point in time we are uncertain as to when we can return to work. The Chief Dental Officer (CDO) for England has brought a halt to all non-essential dental procedures and asked that all emergencies be directed to Urgent Dental Centres (UDC's).

It is our intention for all staff members to return to spend one to two days prior to preparing the practice for reopening and training all our staff so that they are fully aware of the updated procedures before patients return to the practice.

The practice will open once we are given the go ahead to do so by the CDO. In the meantime, we will continue to offer advice, recommendations on analgesics and prescription of antibiotics as and when needed, with a referral to a UDC for extraction or other emergency treatment as and when required. You can contact the practice by:

Email- info@spiresdental.co.uk

Telephone 01543 411 088 and leave a message on the voicemail

WhatsApp messaging – click [here](#)

Website contact page- click [here](#)

Patient communication before reopening

We would of course like to continue providing necessary dental care to all our patients in the safest possible environment. We therefore respectfully request your full cooperation with any new or modified procedures at the practice.

During the period leading up to opening we will be contacting you regularly via email to make you aware, in a staged approach, of the changes we will be making. If you have not received an email from us before, and/or have not had one recently, please contact us ASAP with your email address.

It is essential that we have your email address to facilitate thorough communication at this time.

We fully expect that there will be a staged opening of dental practices with urgent dental needs being addressed first, and more routine treatment being carried out at a later date. At this time we have no timeframe or guidance on when or how this will occur.

As and when we are up and running appointments will be arranged as follows:

- Regular examinations and hygienist visits will be booked online. An online booking link will be emailed or messaged to you and you will be able to book online at your convenience. Please do not phone the practice to arrange these visits unless it is absolutely necessary.
- For treatments such as restorations, root fillings etc we will either contact you directly or send you a booking link. This will depend on the urgency and simplicity of your treatment. The more complex treatment will necessitate direct contact to talk you through your options.

We will refuse to see anyone who attends without an appointment.

If possible, our patients with ongoing or delayed courses of treatment will be prioritised in the first few weeks of opening, alongside patients receiving orthodontic (brace) treatment and those patients who have fallen behind on their routine treatment.

We will request that all patients who are returning to Spires Dental Clinic update their standard Medical and Dental Questionnaire (MDQ) three days before they attend their appointment. This will be provided

by an online tool which includes a detailed section allowing us to assess your level of risk for coronavirus infection.

New measures at Spires Dental Clinic to reduce risk of COVID-19 transmission

The cross-infection control protocols we implement at Spires Dental Clinic guard against all previously known pathogens and they are already woven into the fabric of our clinical activity. The difference with COVID 19 is its inherent virulence and its ability to persist in the environment. This is particularly true when we are carrying out active dental treatments i.e. fillings, ultrasonic scaling etc. where an aerosol is produced that may persist in the surgery on completion. To this end the changes we will implement will focus on:

- reducing footfall
- maintaining social distance between the people that visit us
- reducing the number of visits required for any treatment you need
- stagger the use of our surgeries to ensure we allow any aerosol to settle prior to surgery disinfection and seeing the next patient.

It should be remembered that a dental practice is already a very clean environment compared to public areas but that it is not possible for us to control sources of infection outside the dental practice.

There have been multiple suggestions from many sources as to how the risk of transmission of COVID-19 can be reduced in a dental clinical environment. Some of these are straightforward and some of these are patently impractical when carrying out fine and detailed dental procedures. We have reviewed the evidence, including the types of precautions different countries are taking and feel that the following measures will reduce risk to an acceptable level at the practice. Please be assured that all our staff will also be complying with these procedures to reduce the risk of cross infection in both directions.

Before attending the practice

As mentioned above, we will carry out a pre-attendance assessment via your completed Medical and Dental Questionnaire (MDQ) at least three days before your appointment and, if necessary, a follow-up telephone conversation to assess relative coronavirus infection risk. If we do not receive a completed Online MDQ we will contact you by phone.

In view of the potential seriousness of this disease, please note that we respectfully insist that this Medical and Dental Questionnaire (MDQ) is completed at least three days before your

appointment. If we do not receive the completed questionnaire in time and we are unable to contact you for assessment of your current condition, we will cancel your appointment and inform you by email. You may be charged for the appointment if we are unable to fill it at short notice as per our normal terms and conditions.

If we feel that you are a medium to high risk of having been infected, even if you are asymptomatic, we will respectfully request for you to delay booking any appointments with us for at least one month. We are unsure at this time whether patients who have a high COVID risk will need referral for urgent dental treatment, or whether we will be able to see you.

We recommend that patients in high-risk and extremely high-risk groups delay non-essential dental treatment for as long as possible until the trend of the pandemic becomes clear. To find out whether you are in a higher or very high-risk group please see the link below:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/>

We kindly ask that you leave all non-essential belongings at home or in your car. Coats, bags, and particularly mobile phones can act as fomites in the transmission of COVID 19. If you do happen to bring your phone with you, we will kindly ask that you do not touch or use your phone within the practice.

Travel

When travelling to the practice, we recommend that you limit your close contact with other members of the public as far as possible. If you can drive or be driven and picked up by somebody with whom you live, this would be ideal. Alternatively, we would recommend coming to the practice in a taxi, ideally a partitioned black cab so that you are separated from the driver. Please book cabs in advance as there may be a shortage due to this reason when businesses reopen.

Arriving at the practice

We would like to eliminate waiting times in reception as much as possible so we would ask you to:

- Arrive on time for your appointment
- If you arrive early, we would like you to call us but remain waiting outside, or in your car, until your appointment time.
- Please do not arrive late- we can normally accommodate late arrivals but in these strange times it is unlikely we will be able to see you.

As a practice we will aim to have a clinic room ready for you on your arrival and only ever allow 3 patients into the practice at any given time. We do have a separate waiting room to allow one person maximum to wait but this will only be used as a last resort.

When you attend the practice, we will welcome you, ask for you to hang your coat or jacket at the entrance to the practice and digitally take your temperature. If your temperature is above 37.8°C, you would not be permitted to enter the practice and will be asked to return home and self-isolate as per current government guidelines.

If your temperature is normal, we will ask you to thoroughly wash your hands for 30 seconds with the antiseptic hand wash provided at reception.

You will be directed to the surgery where you will be greeted by one of the nurses.

We will give you 10 ml of 1.5% hydrogen peroxide to gargle with for 1-minute hydrogen peroxide prior to treatment. This has been shown to rapidly kill the virus and reduce any viral load even if you are asymptotically infected. Our clinical staff will be carrying out the same process at each session.

We regret that during this interim period, we will not be providing our normal tea and coffee services in the interests of reducing all opportunities for cross infection to a minimum.

When using the restrooms, please do your best to ensure that you leave the facilities as you would expect to find them. The restrooms will be regularly disinfected between patients and we would respectfully ask that make our team's task easier by being considerate.

Practice procedures

The Spires Dental Clinic team will have spent time critically looking at every aspect of the practice with a view to removing all non-essential items in the open to reduce the number of objects that may act as fomites (surfaces on which microorganisms may reside and can potentially be the cause of cross infection). You will find that the practice may appear quite bare when you attend.

All clinical and common areas including door handles and surfaces will be regularly disinfected at set times using our surgery disinfectant. Doors will be left open where possible to reduce the need to touch door handles.

Spires will be providing an additional 60-minute buffer period between patients for active treatment to allow:

- Any aerosols to settle
- Additional time for decontamination procedures
- allow for any treatment overruns
- allow preparation time for the next patient so that they do not need to wait in the reception area.

All future appointments will be made and confirmed by email or telephone to limit your time spent at reception.

Dental procedures

All dental staff will be upgrading their personal protective equipment in line with current recommendations and evidence including FFP2 and FFP3 masks, visors and protective clothing as appropriate. We apologise in advance for the necessary reduction in social interaction that this will necessitate. Whilst our garb may make us appear impersonal and distant, please be assured we are still the same friendly team underneath it all!

We are especially mindful that most dental treatments are aerosol-generating procedures (AGP's). It is almost impossible for us to carry out meaningful dental procedures without generation of some level of aerosol. Aerosol suspended in the air is a potential source of infection which we wish to keep to a minimum. Currently the dental literature suggests:

- Our use of our normal high-volume suction reduces aerosol production by over 90%.
- The use of dental rubber dam which is also routine in the practice further reduces bio aerosols by a further 30 to 90%
- Our regular facemasks filter approximately 60% of remaining airborne particles.
- FFP2 and FFP3 masks filter 94% and 99% respectively of airborne particles in both directions (patient to clinician and clinician to patient).

We therefore feel that our normal dental procedures can be carried out with minimal risk with use of high-volume suction, dental dam and FFP2 and, in high aerosol generating procedures such as hygienist visit for periodontal treatment, FFP3 masks may be used if possible

You will be able to leave directly at the end of your appointment as payment and further appointments can be arranged remotely.

Payments and missed appointment charges

Spires Dental Clinic will change its normal payment protocol of paying at reception on completion of treatment to avoid the use of payment card terminals. Instead we ask for payment before or after (we are not sure which) the appointment via an online payment transaction.

Despite the financial impact of the coronavirus, Spires Dental Clinic will not be increasing its normal fees for the foreseeable future unless necessary. Our costs will invariably rise given the increased time between patients and the extra, and more elaborate PPE we will require. We will also be running at around 70% efficiency and as such we cannot afford any missed appointments. To this end we will be temporarily changing our missed appointment protocol. Our new protocol will be:

- 100% charge of the full treatment fee if you miss your appointment
- 50% charge of the full fee if you cancel within 24 hours

Vulnerable groups

The general advice for groups that are shielding is to remain at home and delay any non-essential dental treatment.

We intend to set aside dedicated time for vulnerable groups whereby we will shield those groups as much as we possibly can. We will accomplish this by thorough remote preoperative triage, allotting dedicated time in our downstairs surgery and timing the appointments to allow minimal interaction with members of staff and other patients.

After your visit

You will receive an email from the practice 14 days after your visit to ask if you or anyone in your household has had any COVID like symptoms or been diagnosed with COVID 19.

If you develop any symptoms after your visit, we would like you to contact us as soon as possible.

Summary

At the time of writing there are approximately 278 confirmed cases of COVID-19 infection in the Lichfield area at a rate of 267.4 per 100000 people (0.27% infection rate).

<https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/#category=ltlas&map=rate&area=e07000194>

This means that the vast majority of our patients are otherwise healthy without coronavirus infection and we would like to be able to provide normal dental care for these patients in as normal an environment as possible while bearing in mind our responsibilities to mitigate risks of infection spread as far as is practically possible.

This policy will be constantly reviewed and updated as necessitated by circumstances over time. If you have any questions regarding this policy or about your dental care at Spires Dental Clinic please do not hesitate to contact us on info@spiresdental.co.uk