

March 15, 2020

# IMPORTANT NOTICE TO PATIENTS

**All March appointments at our office are cancelled.**

Starting on Monday, March 16, and continuing until further notice, we must implement new restrictions on patient care. This is based on the latest advice we have received from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention about the coronavirus outbreak.

***Please read all this information carefully.***

If you have an appointment at the dental office of Anna V. O'Keefe DMD PA for routine adult dental treatment (such as a checkup, cleaning, filling, or crown), ***the appointment is canceled and we will work with you to reschedule it. We are now restricting treatment to urgent or emergency care only.***

Dental care settings invariably carry the risk of COVID-19 infection. Dental patients and professionals have a higher risk of exposure due to the aerosol nature of transmission of this coronavirus and the close proximity required for dental treatment. We always strictly adhere to universal precautions, meaning we do all that is suggested and required in our normal operations to prevent transmission of any disease. Unfortunately, there is an insufficient supply of the necessary aerosol-filtering masks to ensure the safety of our clinical staff. As our employees' and patients' safety is our utmost priority, we have made the decision to close.

***Urgent or emergency care for adults*** at Anna V. O'Keefe DMD PA will be provided at our office for the foreseeable future. In order to be seen in our office, you must have one or more of these conditions:

- Severe toothache pain (not just a twinge);
- Swelling of your gums, face, or neck;
- Bleeding in your mouth that does not stop;
- Infection or a substantial risk of it;
- Trauma (such as a broken tooth where the tooth is painful).

If you do require urgent care, ***please do not come in without first calling the office at 207-872-8911.*** We will return your call at our earliest opportunity.

We regret that we must restrict our patient care this way. We are serving our patients in the safest manner possible by following the advice of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention under these difficult circumstances. In doing this, we will safeguard the health and safety of our patients, our care providers, and the whole community. We hope you understand, and we thank you for your cooperation.

# Frequently asked questions for patients

*(NOTE: This has been updated with new information on March 14, 2020.)*

*What is coronavirus?*

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses, some causing respiratory illness in people and others circulating among animals. Rarely, animal coronaviruses can evolve and infect people and then spread between people. Previous coronavirus outbreaks have included Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). COVID-19 is the disease caused by the novel coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2.

Although we have a lot to learn about this virus, it appears to spread like other respiratory viruses — by people with the infection coughing and sneezing. These droplets are inhaled by other people or moved to the eyes, nose, or mouth by contaminated hands.

*What are the symptoms of COVID-19?*

Symptoms of COVID-19 are flu-like and include fever, cough, sore throat, and shortness of breath. Most people develop only mild symptoms. But some people, usually those with other medical complications or those over age 60, may develop more severe symptoms, including pneumonia.

*I have a scheduled appointment at the dental office of Anna V. O’Keefe DMD PA. What should I do?*

If you have an appointment for routine care in the month of March (such as an exam, a cleaning, or a filling), ***it is being canceled***. Following expert recommendations, we are now restricting patient visits to urgent or emergency care only, as indicated above. We will work with you to reschedule your visit. There are a few limited exceptions, which are also listed above.

To reschedule an appointment or if you have any questions, please call us and await a call back. We are, as one could expect, fielding a high number of phone calls and will return your call as soon as we can.

*If I have an urgent appointment at the dental office of Anna V O’Keefe DMD PA, who can I bring to the office with me?*

Translators, parents, guardians, and other necessary support people are welcome to accompany our patients to appointments but must remain in the waiting area unless their presence in the treatment room is required for treatment. You are expected to honor social distancing recommendations and remain 6 feet from others in hallways and reception areas, and during social interactions. Depending on how many people are in the waiting area, they may be asked to wait in another area or outside. They must pass

our office's COVID-19 screening procedure on arrival. Additional screening may continue later. Any other people, **including children**, may NOT accompany the patient to his/her appointment.

**Please note carefully:** Patients may be accompanied into the actual treatment area by another person or service animal ONLY if their presence is essential for completion of the dental treatment. An accompanying person must first pass all our screening for COVID-19, including the absence of any fever over 100 degrees F. This screening must be done by our office's personnel.

*I have been calling the office of Anna V. O'Keefe DMD PA and cannot reach anyone. What should I do?*

Please wait until you hear back from us. We are trying to respond to our patients' calls as quickly as possible, but under the current circumstances, our response may be delayed.

*What do I do if I have COVID-19 symptoms?*

If you have a cough, fever, or other respiratory problems, call and speak with your health care provider before going to a medical facility. Do not go to an emergency room.

If you believe you are experiencing life-threatening symptoms, call 9-1-1.

If you do feel ill, don't panic. Most people who get the novel coronavirus disease have only minor symptoms and do not need medical care. In fact, most people with symptoms who are tested for COVID-19 have a negative test. Their symptoms are most likely due to influenza or seasonal allergies. However, you should contact your doctor to inform him/her of your symptoms and get advice.

If you have a mild case, your doctor may advise you to treat your symptoms at home.

Staying home also helps prevent you from exposing other people to the disease.

For those who have a more serious case, call before you head to the urgent care or emergency room. That will help the medical team to prepare for your arrival, so you can receive the fastest and best possible care. It will also help them to protect other people from your infection.

*Should I be tested for COVID-19?*

Testing is generally conducted at a health care provider's office. While there are no restrictions on who can get tested, not everybody who feels ill needs to be tested, particularly if you have mild illness. If you are sick with fever, cough, or shortness of breath, and are in a high-risk group, call your health care provider to discuss whether you should be tested for COVID-19.

*What should I do to keep myself and those close to me safe?*

The most important steps to take are the same as for every cold and flu season: Wash your hands frequently for at least 20 seconds with soap and hot water. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol content; 70% is even better) if you cannot wash. Stay home if you are feeling ill. If you experience symptoms, call your doctor's office. They will help you determine if you need to be seen and provide you with instructions for seeking medical care.

Public Health — people at higher risk of severe illness should stay home and away from large groups of people as much as possible, including public places with lots of people and large gatherings where there will be close contact with others. This is called “social distancing” and means that in any group, you would never be closer than 6 feet from any other person. People at higher risk include:

- People age 60 and older
- People with underlying health conditions including heart disease, lung disease, or diabetes
- People who have weakened immune systems
- People who are pregnant

*Where can I learn more about COVID-19?*

For more information on COVID-19, visit [Maine CDC's webpage](#).