

Back to COMMON SENSE

Bad oral health could lead to
serious general-health problems



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BACK TO COMMON SENSE

The European Federation of Periodontology (EFP) reminds dental patients that interrupting their treatment may seriously affect their health.

By avoiding visiting the dentist, many people may be putting their overall health and even their lives at risk, as poor oral health is associated with diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, dementia, and other serious conditions.

The EFP recommends that dental professionals and patients follow the Covid-19 safety protocols in order to avoid any infection risks at the dental practice.

In the last few months, many dental patients around the world have seen their treatment abruptly suspended because of the Covid-19 (SARS-CoV-2) pandemic. Oral-healthcare practitioners have implemented new protocols and recommendations to postpone non-urgent treatment, which have caused significant delays in dental care and dental treatment plans.

To provide the dental sector with guidance navigating the Covid-19 crisis effectively, the European Federation of Periodontology (EFP) has issued evidence-based recommendations for dentists which include a safety protocol for dental practices to follow when treating patients before, during, and after their arrival in the dental office.

Similar preventive measures have been proposed and adopted worldwide by other national and international dental organisations and they appear to have proven effective in limiting viral spread in the dental setting. Both the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) say that there have been no confirmed cases of Covid-19 transmitted in a dental office.

“Oral health is a vital component of general health and wellbeing, and all of us need to keep looking after our teeth and gums for a better quality of life,” says Professor Nicola West, secretary general of the EFP. “The unique characteristics of the dental setting and profession have always warranted infection control”, emphasises Professor Filippo Graziani, EFP past president and chair of the federation’s European project committee.

“The overall number of dental professionals who have contracted Covid-19 appears extremely limited when

compared to the general population (*see relevant documents below), even in the early period of the pandemic. This reinforces the concept that cross-infection is of paramount importance to us as dentists and one of the pillars of our doctrine”.

Dentistry is well prepared to prevent any infection risks related to the current pandemic, as the profession is taking effective measures to remain safe for both patients and practitioners. It is important to remember that neglecting dental health—even for a limited period of time—comes at a price and may have a negative impact on overall health because periodontal and dental diseases are linked to serious chronic conditions. According to the scientific evidence, poor oral health can be associated with diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, dementia, and other serious conditions.

“Dentists and periodontists have always been obligated to use effective protection protocols to keep their patients safe from any infection,” adds Professor Graziani. “The EFP is helping dental professionals to manage patients in a secure manner thanks to a clear safety protocols and they are ready and prepared to treat their patients safely”.

Focusing on creating awareness of the safety protocols and promoting the benefits of taking care of oral and gum health at all times, the EFP launched in August the social-media campaign “Back to common sense”. All dental patients and professionals are invited to access the Covid-19 recommendations on the EFP website, to share them, and to keep track of their dental treatments with strict respect to an adequate safety protocol, such as that provided by the EFP, those of other dental and health organisations, and the recommendations of local and national healthcare authorities.

* Relevant scientific bibliography:

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