

Valley Dental Practice

POST LOCKDOWN RE-OPENING POLICY

After many long weeks in lockdown, we are finally able to welcome back our lovely patients. Since the final week of March, when we were forced to close our doors, we have spent our time planning for the re-opening of our practice. Whilst awaiting the green light from the government, we have been consulting widely with the appropriate authorities to ensure we comply fully with all relevant safety regulations – and we have gone further still, investing in the latest technology, and reviewing all of our working practices, to help ensure patients and staff remain safe at all times.

Thank you for your Patience

From the bottom of our hearts, we thank you all for your patience and understanding. Whilst we've been away, we have received so many lovely messages from you and these have meant a lot to us during this very difficult time. Likewise, we hope that you and your love ones have been coping in isolation and staying safe.

During our closure, we have had to innovate and find new ways of working. Please continue to bear with us for a while longer. As you can imagine, it was difficult having to close at such short notice, and a large number of cancelled appointments now require scheduling.

Our fabulous team is currently busy restoring some order to our appointment book. If you have outstanding treatments, they will be in touch very soon, but if you have not heard from us by 20th July, do feel free to give us a call.

Returning From 29th June 2020

We are hoping to be able to return on the 29th June, offering routine examinations, hygienist visits and catching up with those patients that have outstanding treatment.

Changes to our working practices

This policy document describes the things you will see and details what you'll need to know when you come into the practice. The new procedures contained within have been prepared following detailed risk assessments, which draw on multiple sources within the dental and medical professions, whilst following current government guidance.

Our post-lockdown re-opening policy outlines modifications to our normal working practices that we intend to implement so the practice can be reopened for its intended purpose. It is not yet known whether these changes will exist for a temporary period or whether they will become permanent features of the way our dental practice will need to operate in order to ensure long-term patient and staff safety.

Given the ongoing nature of the research into Covid-19, this policy will likely change in line with new guidance, which will be monitored closely by our Principle Dentist and our management team. Valley Dental Practice will be training all staff to practice our newly updated procedures, during scheduled training days leading up to our re-opening.

Travelling to your appointment

- Patients are asked to minimise contact with members of the public on the way to their appointment and avoid using public transport unless this is absolutely necessary.
- Wherever possible, patients are requested to attend their dental appointments alone. You may attend with a carer, child, or parent/guardian if necessary.
- All patient documentation will be sent via email or SMS for patients to complete prior to the appointment.
- Patients are asked to attend with minimal personal belongings and will have to place these items into a storage box once inside the surgery (shopping bags are not allowed).
- Patients are requested not to arrive early for their appointments and to please wait outside until one of the nurses come to collect you for your appointment.

Entering the building

- When you enter the building, please use the alcohol gel provided to sanitise your hands
- Our nurse will then check your temperature and we will re-confirm some screening questions.
- If for any reason you fail the temperature test or do not pass the screening criteria, you will be asked to leave the practice and reschedule your appointment.
- You will be asked to place all personal belongings into a plastic storage box
- You will then be taken straight through to the surgery for your appointment

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Around the practice

- Ideally, we ask that payment is made either via a chip and pin or contactless card transaction, but alternative arrangements can be made if required
- The use of patient toilets will be restricted and wherever possible we ask that you go before arriving at the practice but, if you require use of the facilities, please ask reception as we need to monitor use to ensure the necessary disinfection protocols are followed after use.
- Our water fountain will be out of use. Please bring bottled water with you if you require a drink.
- We ask you to bear with our staff members during this time – we are working hard to keep you safe and these policies are new to us all. Verbal abuse will not be tolerated.
- You may find that colleagues are less able than usual to spend time chatting with patients. Please do not be offended, this is purely to keep everybody safe.

Entering the clinical setting

- Once you have entered the surgery you will be greeted by your dentist and nurse who will be wearing full PPE (personal protective equipment).
- Once seated in the chair, your dental consultation/treatment will commence as usual

Leaving the clinical setting

- Once you have completed your appointment, you can return to reception to collect your personal belongings, book future appointments, and make payment if necessary
- Once each patient has left the practice setting, a strict cleaning protocol will be followed.

Environmental cleaning procedures

At Valley Dental Practice, we have spent time scrutinising every aspect of the practice with a view to removing all non-essential items that could potentially be the cause of infection. As such, all books and patient information (unless laminated) have been removed from the practice, although these will remain readily available at the patient's request.

All clinical and communal areas including door handles and surfaces will be cleaned regularly and disinfected in addition to our normal cleaning protocols between patients. Periods of downtime will be scheduled throughout the day for additional cleaning procedures.

Dental Procedures

Our dental team will be using PPE in line with current guidelines. We are especially mindful that many dental interventions are aerosol generating procedures (AGP's) and it is difficult for us to carry out some dental treatments without the generation of some aerosol.

Aerosol suspended in the air is a theoretical source of infection, which we obviously wish to keep to a minimum. Currently the dental literature suggests:

- The use of high-volume suction reduces aerosol production by over 90%
- Our regular surgical facemasks filter approximately 60% of remaining airborne particles
- FFP2 and FFP3 masks filter 94% and 99% respectively of airborne particles in both directions.

We therefore feel that our normal dental procedures can be carried out at minimal risk using high-volume suction, surgical and FFP2/FFP3 masks.

Along with the above, the Valley Dental Practice has taken additional precautions:

- The practice has air filtration systems in both surgeries
- We have implemented the use of pre-treatment mouthwash (OraWise+), which has been developed to both reduce the risk of viral load posed by aerosol generating procedures and to assist biofilm management during standard and specialist dental treatment.
- We have introduced the use of Optizil surface spray with its active ingredient of Hypochlorous acid (HOCl), which is part of a group of small molecules known as reactive oxygen species (ROS). This is the same chemical produced by the human immune defence system to kill viruses and fight infection.

Summary

The vast majority of our patients are healthy, without coronavirus infection, and we are confident of our ability to provide dental care to these patients in as normal an environment as possible whilst bearing in mind our responsibilities to mitigate the risks of spreading infection as far as is practically possible.

We do hope you'll be reassured by the information above and feel safe when attending the practice. Please do not be alarmed when you see us in our protective clothing – our staff are still the same lovely, smiley team, but they are now working under somewhat different circumstances.

We cannot wait to see you all again. Until then, keep safe and well.