



Rockingham Dental Centre  
excellent care • gentle touch

19<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Dear Patient,

I hope this finds you well.

Last week, the coronavirus (Covid-19) situation was upgraded to a pandemic.

While the word “pandemic” sounds scary, we wanted to reassure you:

1. The definition of a pandemic is “a disease epidemic that has spread over a large region”.
2. The word doesn't actually indicate severity in any given population or place.
3. It can and will be much more severe if we don't all band together.
4. **BUT** we're not there yet!
5. We are still in a situation where we can very realistically blunt the impact in a significant way and while that includes some short-term discomfort, it could be the difference in the number of lives affected and number of lives lost.
6. We have time on our side and if we take the right efforts in that time, we can get ahead of this and reduce the relative impact on our people in our community.

#### **Official Recommendations from the Federal Government for Covid-19 as of 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020**

1. Essential health services including dental will continue to operate as normal. There is no current advice or mandate from the Federal Government, AHPRA or the Dental Board that suggests dental services should be limited or ceased.
2. While at this time, there is no requirement that dental services reduce or cease, we will be developing contingency plans to assist practices and patients in the event the advice of the Health Department changes.

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In addition to this, we have consulted with doctors, overseas colleagues and specialists and as a team, we have decided to be proactive and to take extra precautions for the benefit of our patients, team and the community at large.

**Our infection control policies in Australia and by extension, our policies at Rockingham Dental Centre, are second to none compared to other countries internationally. Under most circumstances, universal infection control guidelines should be more than enough to mitigate risk of infection and transmission. However, this is uncharted territory and generally, we will not understand the disease or ramifications fully until after the fact. This is why we are implementing more extensive infection control policies as follows.**

#### **Additional Precautions taken by Rockingham Dental Centre**

1. **Before your appointment:**
  - a. Please take your temperature before attending the practice and if over 37.5 °C, please call us and reschedule your appointment.

- b. Please call ahead and reschedule your appointments if you have flu-like symptoms (coughing, runny nose, fever > 37.5°C, diarrhoea, shortness of breath).
- c. If you have any of the above, in addition to changing your appointment, please call the Coronavirus hotline on 1800 020 080 and/or contact your GP as to what medical advice to take.

## 2. At the practice itself:

- a. Continue to clean and disinfect public areas frequently including door handles, chairs and bathrooms.
- b. We have allowed extended appointments with buffering times to minimise the number of people in a room at the same time, allow for social distancing and extra time for increased sterilisation and disinfection procedures.
- c. We would suggest for patients who have an appointment, to check in with our reception team and then wait in their car. After which we contact you when your dentist is available to proceed so we minimise communal waiting time.
- d. We are a seven-chair practice but will only be operating with two clinicians at a time, with two distinct teams to keep both the patients and our team members safe and to maintain the integrity of our infection control procedures.
- e. Have patients rinse with a 1% hydrogen peroxide solution before each appointment.
- f. Continue to use rubber dam when appropriate to decrease possible exposure to infectious agents.
- g. Continue to use high-speed evacuation for dental procedures producing an aerosol as well as autoclave handpieces after each patient.
- h. Provide limited services only to protect you, the patient. These will be expanded upon below.

## Why are we doing this?

1. **Continuation of Care:** No matter what happens, patients will still have dental problems which if not addressed will become dental pain and infection. So we believe it is our duty as health care practitioners to continue providing these services albeit in a way that is in line with the current situation.
2. **Ease the Burden:** We want to assist emergency services so they are not overloaded for dental or non dental emergencies that can be addressed at our clinic. We have seen the effects in other countries when emergency services are at beyond full capacity and we are committed to trying to avoid this.
3. **Coronavirus is** one of the easiest types of viruses to kill with the appropriate disinfectant product. The problem is that it is mostly invisible so we have to assume it's on all unknown surfaces.
4. **Flattening the Curve:** There are countless resources on what this means so we won't add to it unless you'd like us to. Contact us if we can answer any queries on this point.

## What does Limited Services mean?

For you as the patient, it's "business as usual" so if you have concerns or you need some treatment done, give us a call.

There is no one size fits all and we are assessing needs on a case-by-case basis.

For us – we will take the responsibility of knowing what's in your best interest and will call you if we feel treatment may best be delayed.

If in doubt, email, call or contact us on Social Media. Our contact details are attached.

### **What can YOU do?**

1. Take this seriously.
2. It's ok to feel anxious and out of control in this type of situation but we're not in a place where we need to panic.
3. We need to take necessary precautions to avoid worsening the situation
4. Take your temperature on a semi-regular basis (including your children)
5. Stay on the WHO website to keep up to date
6. Specifically, read up on:
  - Social distancing
  - Self isolation
  - Flattening the curve
  - Quarantine
  - And the differences between the above
  - And when you need to do the above
7. Stay tuned to our social media (Facebook, Instagram) where we will post relevant updates for practice-specific and general information.
8. If you have any questions – dental or non-dental – please contact us with any of the above methods and we will do our best to get back to you promptly

This could all change tomorrow but the steps we have taken, we believe are necessary for today.

These protocols have also been built with an amount of flexibility that allows us to change as the situation evolves.

Thank you for your patience, understanding and continued support.

We are here for you as both dentists, health care practitioners and members of the local community as we have been for 50 years.

We're all in this together.

Stay safe,

Dr Hari Menon  
on behalf of the Dentists & Team  
at Rockingham Dental Centre

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