



PUTNAM COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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A PHAB-ACCREDITED HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Governor Announces Dental Practices Permitted to Reopen
Guidelines updated to ensure safety for patients and staff

BREWSTER, NY— Governor Cuomo announced dentists can begin seeing patients for routine dental care starting on June 1. Originally slated to reopen in “Phase 2,” dentists have been given the green light sooner than expected with declining NYS coronavirus cases, hospitalizations, intubations and deaths.

“Our dental health care providers in Putnam have been team players from the start of this pandemic,” says County Executive MaryEllen Odell. “Some donated masks and gloves to our frontline workers and all have now invested time and resources to ensure safety for their patients and staff as they return to their offices.”

From physical distancing to personal protective equipment, New York State has shared a twelve-page document which includes a link for providers to affirm their receipt of and agreement to follow the guidance set forth.

For dental health care providers, proper use of personal protective equipment is nothing new. While dental settings are traditionally designed with patient and provider safety in mind, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), dentistry in the time of the novel coronavirus goes further to balance the need to provide necessary services while minimizing risk to patients and dental health care personnel.

On March 16, the American Dental Association (ADA) was one of the first national professional health associations to recommend postponement of all but urgent or emergency procedures. Just over two months later, the ADA designed an interim return to work toolkit for dental practitioners. Together with documents from the CDC, and now New York State, the comprehensive guidance addresses ways dentists and hygienists can reduce the risk of coronavirus transmission before, during and after visits.

Dr. Daniel Doyle, of Doyle Dental and president of the Putnam County Board of Health says, “The dentists of Putnam County are thrilled to be back seeing their patients. They are now seeing all patients for routine procedures, not just for emergencies.”

As dental offices begin planning to reopen their doors they may be adapting their offices to meet new safety state and federal guidelines. Doyle Dental's website and patient correspondence describes new safety protocols. Some changes patients can expect as they return to their dentist's office include plexiglass partitions at reception, waiting room modifications including chair spacing, removal of magazines and mask requirements as well as screening for symptoms of illness. Additionally, because many dentists donated their personal protective equipment (PPE) to essential workers and closed their doors for over two months, some may have had to rebuild their PPE stock.

Modifications to dental care will impact everything from pre-appointment communication to provider and patient interactions. According to the ADA, dental office staff may call patients for a preliminary health screening prior to an appointment. Patients may notice their dentist or dental hygienist wearing additional protective gear such as a face shield and gown. While the state allows offices to begin reopening as of June 1, Dr. Doyle recommends residents check with their local dentist regarding specific safety measures and exact reopening dates.

The mission of the Putnam County Department of Health, nationally accredited by the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB), is to improve and protect the health of the Putnam County community, composed of nearly 100,000 residents. Core services, provided directly and through collaboration, include community health assessment, disease surveillance and control, emergency preparedness, environmental health protection, family health promotion and health education. For more information, please visit our County website at www.putnamcountyny.com/coronavirus; or visit our social media sites @PutnamHealthNY on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

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