



Royal College of
Dental Surgeons of Ontario

Ensuring Continued Trust

BULLETIN

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TO: ALL RCDSO MEMBERS

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT SEVERE ACUTE RESPIRATORY SYNDROME (SARS)

This is a second Bulletin prepared by the College on SARS to answer frequently asked questions and to share the most current information received from the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care and the City of Toronto Public Health Department. It is a follow-up to the initial Bulletin released on Thursday, March 27, 2003, and posted on our Web site at www.rcdso.org. The College will keep members informed as new information becomes available.

What questions should we ask patients when booking appointments?

The College recommends that dental offices ask all patients the following questions when booking or confirming appointments:

- Do you have a fever and how high?
- Do you have any respiratory symptoms such as cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing?
- Have you travelled within the past 10 days to any of the following affected areas in Asia: China (Hong Kong, Guangdong and Taiwan provinces), Vietnam (Hanoi) or Singapore?
- Have you had close contact* with any person considered or suspected to have Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) within the past 10 days?
- Have you visited any of the following hospitals for any reason within the past 10 days: Scarborough Hospital, Grace Division; York Central Hospital in Richmond Hill; or any other hospital for whom quarantine orders have been issued?
- Are you a health-care worker or hospital staff member who works in a hospital in the Greater Toronto area or Simcoe County or other facility that has treated SARS patients?

* *Close contact is defined by Health Canada as having cared for, lived with or had face-to-face (within 1 metre) contact with, or having had direct contact with respiratory secretions and/or body fluids of a person considered or suspected to have SARS.*

The College advises delaying dental treatment for patients answering “yes” to any of the above questions until the patient’s symptoms have resolved or until more than 10 days have passed since the patient’s arrival from an affected area or last contact with a patient considered or suspected to have SARS.

What should we do if a patient who appears ill or who presents with respiratory symptoms arrives at the office as a walk-in appointment?

Dental treatment for such patients should be delayed unless the dental condition will pose a medical threat to the patient if left untreated.

To assist the patient, you should ask the patient for details of his/her symptoms and the remainder of the questions listed above.

Any patient with a fever > 38 degrees Celsius AND one or more respiratory symptoms AND a history of travel to one of these areas or contact with a probable case of SARS AND no other known cause of current illness should be referred for medical assessment and treatment IMMEDIATELY after calling ahead to ensure appropriate isolation and precautions in the physician's office or hospital emergency room.

If no close contact (as defined above) has occurred during the patient's attendance at the office then no extraordinary measures are required.

You can call the local public health unit for advice regarding dental office staff and other patients who have had contact with the patient in the waiting room.

An appointment for the patient can be scheduled after respiratory symptoms have resolved, or more than 10 days have passed since returning from an affected area in Asia, or since the date of last contact with a patient with SARS.

What infection control precautions should we take when providing emergency dental treatment for patients who report a history of travel to affected areas in Asia OR a fever or respiratory symptoms OR a history of contact with a SARS patient?

The College advises delaying treatment for such patients if possible. For true emergencies (severe pain or infection) for which treatment can not be delayed or managed by pharmacological means alone, the minimum emergency treatment should be provided. Wherever possible, a referral to a hospital dental clinic is recommended.

Health Canada recommends routine, airborne and contact precautions when treating patients suspected or considered to have SARS.

In the dental office this means:

- handwashing after any direct contact with the patient, after contact with body fluids or respiratory secretions, after contact with items known or likely to be contaminated with respiratory secretions, before donning gloves, and after removing gloves;
- personal barrier protection (clean non-sterile gloves, long-sleeved gown, surgical mask or preferably N-95 mask) during all patient contact and eye protection or face shields where there is a potential for aerosol or splatter;
- minimizing aerosol and splatter by use of antimicrobial rinse, rubber dam, high volume suction, hand instrumentation where possible;
- treating these patients when no other patients are present;

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- treating these patients in a room with a closed door if possible;
- covering all surfaces that may come into contact with respiratory secretions with an impermeable disposable barrier or alternatively disinfecting these surfaces following treatment using a high-level (hospital grade) disinfectant between patients;
- routine precautions for handling soiled linen and clinical waste following municipal / regional requirements; and
- gowns should be removed before leaving the operatory.

Further information can be found in the following documents available on-line on the Health Canada Web site:

- *Routine Practices and Additional Precautions for Preventing the Transmission of Infection in Health Care; and*
- *Infection Control Guidance for Health Care Workers in Outpatient Settings.*

Where can we get information regarding quarantine orders made by public health units in the Greater Toronto area?

At the time of writing, hospitals closed and affected by quarantine order are York Central Hospital in Richmond Hill and Scarborough Hospital, Grace Division in Toronto. Information regarding quarantine orders can be obtained on the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care Web site, or by contacting your local public health unit.

What should we do if we have already treated a patient with a history of close contact with a patient with SARS or a history of travel to an affected area?

You may consider contacting the patient to find out whether he/she has developed symptoms consistent with SARS since his/her appointment in the dental office. If he/she has, you should call your local public health unit for advice and direction.

Where can we obtain N-95 masks?

N-95 masks are masks that filter particles one micron in size, and have a 95% filter efficiency, and provide a tight facial seal (less than 10% leak). Standard TB masks meet these criteria.

The College has been advised that N-95 masks are not generally available for purchase at the current time. The College is attempting to obtain a supply source of masks and will notify its members when a supply becomes available for distribution to dentists.

Nexa Dental (1-800-437-5606) has reported that it has masks that meet the specifications available for purchase and delivery within two days by United Parcel Service (UPS).

Dentists may also consider contacting their local hospital or public health unit to obtain a small supply of N-95 masks for use when providing emergency dental treatment for patients with the risk factors listed above.

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CONTACT INFORMATION:

- A list of Health Canada documents about SARS for the general public and health care practitioners can be found at www.hc-sc.gc.ca.
- General information regarding SARS can be obtained by calling Ontario's Health Infoline at 1-888-668-4636, or the Toronto Public Health Hotline at (416) 338-7600, or by visiting the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care Web site at www.health.gov.on.ca.
- Locations and telephone numbers of local public health units can be found on the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care Web site at www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/contact/phu/phuloc_dt.html
- Patients who have visited the Scarborough Hospital, Grace Division between March 16 and March 31 should call Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000 for direction.
- Patients who have visited the York Central Hospital in Richmond Hill between March 16 and March 28 should call York Region Public Health Unit at 1-800-361-5653 for direction.
- Patients who are in home isolation should call their local public health unit if they have any concerns or questions.
- Health Canada SARS case definitions can be found at www.hc-sc.gc.ca/pphb-dgspsp/sars-sras/sarscasedef-0317_e.html.
- Routine Practices and Additional Precautions for Preventing the Transmission of Infection in Health Care can be found at www.hc-sc.gc.ca/pphb-dgspsp/publicat/ccdr-rmtc/99pdf/cdr25s4e.pdf.
- Infection Control Guidance for Health Care Workers in Outpatient Settings: SARS can be found at www.hc-sc.gc.ca/pphb-dgspsp/sars-sras/pdf/sars-outpatient-factsheet-0324_e.pdf.