

To: All NI GDPs

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Dear Colleague

Practice Preparations for COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

COVID-19 is circulating in the community and so we are now in the delay phase of the response to COVID-19. As a result the case definition has changed.

From today the public are being advised to stay at home (self-isolate) if they have a new continuous cough or a high temperature. Travel and contact history are no longer part of the case definition. This new advice is available to the public at <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>

People are being advised that they do not need to seek medical advice before self-isolating. However if they have underlying medical conditions, or their symptoms worsen or are no better after 7 days they should contact their GMP. Self-isolation can end on day 8 after the onset of symptoms if clinical improvement has occurred and they have been afebrile for 2 days. Testing will not generally be offered unless people are admitted to hospital.

General dental practitioners are not expected to examine and treat patients who meet the new case definition.

Practices should consider contacting patients prior to their attendance to ensure they do not meet the case definition. Patients who attend the practice who do meet the case definition should be advised to return home immediately, self-isolate and contact NHS111 for advice. Care and treatment should be

rearranged for after this period of self-isolation. Further information is available in the Dental FAQ Advice Sheet available at <http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/services/3111.htm>

Alternative arrangements for patients who meet the new case definition and who require emergency dental treatment are being finalised and will be confirmed in due course.

Patients who do not meet the case definition can be seen and treated as usual with standard cross-infection and decontamination procedures followed. FFP3 masks are not required for these patients. FFP3 masks are only required for the treatment of COVID-19 patients in which an aerosol generating procedure is provided; as outlined above it is not expected that dental practitioners should be examining or treating COVID-19 patients.

Healthcare workers are advised to follow the same guidance as members of the public in regards to self-isolation with self-isolation only required if they experience a new persistent cough or a high temperature. Healthcare workers do not need to be tested prior to their return to work when they are symptom free following self-isolation.

Further advice in relation to Business Continuity will be issued on Wednesday 18th March. The HSCB are aware of the financial impact on dental practices during this period; the Department of Health are considering financial mitigation measures and we hope the Department will approve these soon.

As per previous correspondence I would recommend you review your HSCNI email and the BSO Dental COVID Webpage daily.

Thank you again for your ongoing support during this challenging period.

Yours sincerely



Michael Donaldson
Head of Dental Services, HSCB