

### **1 When will dental services return to normal?**

The HSC has set out a phased return of dental services across Northern Ireland – <http://www.hscboard.hscni.net/phased-return-dental-services>

A three step approach will be taken:

- 1A, the current phase will be followed by 1b on June 8<sup>th</sup> when there will be no change to restrictions but all practices will be expected to offer face-to-face urgent dental care in an attempt to maximise the number of patients with urgent needs being treated. Patients requiring more complex care will continue to be referred to one of the five urgent dental care centres for treatment by their dentist. These centres will continue to carry out limited aerosol-generating procedures as appropriate.
- Phase 2, in addition to the current restrictions, practices will be able to offer non-urgent dental care, however, treatments will be limited to those that are non-aerosol generating. Urgent dental care centres will continue during Phase 2.
- Phase 3 will see a return to routine dental care and Aerosol-generating procedures provided in general dental practice. Practices will have to comply with the extant guidance in relation to aerosol settling periods between patients, surgery cleaning and PPE.

The movement through phases 1 to 3 will be guided by the scientific and public health evidence, availability of appropriate PPE for dental staff, and will also take into consideration the oral needs of the population. At this stage it is not possible to put dates on when a transition from phase 2 to phase 3 will take place.

It should also be noted that it may be necessary in the future to tighten restrictions if that is deemed to be in the best interests of the population.

### **2 Will I be expected to wear my own PPE?**

Dental practices will not routinely be providing PPE to patients as they attend for appointments. However, the dental team will be wearing appropriate PPE and measures will be in place to maintain social distancing. Patients are welcome to wear a face covering as they travel to and attend their appointment.

### **3 My child is waiting for orthodontic treatment. How much longer will they have to wait to see a dentist?**

We anticipate that dentists should be able to offer orthodontic treatment which is not aerosol-generating from Phase 2 of the recovery plan although priority will be given to patients in the middle of treatment in the first instance.

#### **4 What is an aerosol generating procedure?**

Many dental treatments are aerosol generating. This means procedures which use equipment such as drills and other high-speed tools, which create a lot of 'spray' from patients' mouths. Aerosols can be minimised but they cannot be prevented.

#### **5 Is there going to be long waiting lists?**

There may initially be higher demand for certain procedures but we are working with all dental practices to ensure that the most urgent patients are prioritised.

#### **6 If I ring my dentist now can I get to see someone at my usual practice?**

Dentists are speaking to patients over the phone initially and if required, offering face to face appointments. From 8th June, all dentists will start offering face to face appointments, however, in some circumstances this may be offered with another local practice.

#### **7 If I am in pain what do I do right now? Who do I contact?**

Contact your own dentist in the first instance for any dental problem. Your dentist can offer you advice or write you a prescription for pain relief medicine or antibiotics if necessary. For urgent and emergency needs they can either offer you an appointment or refer you to an urgent dental care clinics depending on the treatment required.