



ISDS: Illinois Patients, Public Health Greatly Benefit from Dental Care During COVID-19 Pandemic

August 4 2020 9:38 AM

SPRINGFIELD – As the coronavirus pandemic continues to cause great concern and uncertainty around Illinois, dental offices are reopening and seeing patients with a clear message: your safety is our No. 1 priority as we work to improve your health.

The Illinois State Dental Society, representing dentists and dental offices statewide, has been working closely with its members and Gov. JB Pritzker's Administration since the pandemic hit the state in March. Initially, dental offices were closed to all but urgent or emergency needs, but they have since reopened.

ISDS has worked with its members to develop detailed safety protocols and patient education to ensure patients feel safe for visits, and any issues that might arise are dealt with appropriately. ISDS has developed an online COVID-19 educational toolkit for patients, dental offices, policymakers and the general public covering a number of important topics:

- Why dental care is necessary during the pandemic, as gum disease and other oral health problems can become much more serious and widespread if left untreated
- Why dental care is safe during the pandemic, with offices taking detailed steps to sanitize and sterilize equipment and protect patients
- What patients can expect when they return for visits, from a new look for waiting rooms and dental chairs to medical precautions for each patient
- Where to get dental care if you do not have a dentist

The ISDS toolkit has been developed largely with resources provided throughout the pandemic by the society's parent organization, the American Dental Association, in conjunction with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

While ISDS and its dental members encourage all Illinoisans who are overdue for care to get an appointment soon, some younger Illinoisans must do so by law. A new state law that took effect last year requires all incoming high school freshmen to get a dental exam before school starts, joining incoming kindergarteners, second graders and sixth graders, in an effort to promote strong oral care as children get older. (*See more in the release below*).

All of these topics are discussed in more detail on the [COVID-19 Toolkit](#).

Eric Larson, executive director of ISDS, said Illinois dentists are seeing overwhelmingly positive response as patients realize dental offices are focused on providing the safest experience possible for their return during the pandemic. The online resources and in-person experience should help ease any concerns Illinoisans have about seeing the dentist again, and help ensure dental care remains an essential part of Illinois' public health plan moving forward.

“Our members shut down their offices to all but the most urgent needs this spring to do our part to fight the spread of coronavirus,” Larson said. “But what we have learned since then is that Illinoisans cannot and must not go months without seeing their dentist.

“Dental offices have always embraced the most stringent protocols to keep our offices clean and safe for all patients, because the public health risks are too great when you're providing this kind of close-contact care. We are proud of the diligence our dental offices have shown to understand patients' concerns and address them head on.

“We encourage incoming high school freshmen to follow the law and see their dentist before school begins in the coming weeks. We ask anyone with concerns about returning to their dentist to take time to review the toolkit and then reach out to their dentist to see how they are working to protect everyone they see. The sooner everyone can get back on their normal oral health schedule with their dental professional, the better our public health will be for it.”