

# **Edwardsville Dentist Hal Patton Endorses ADA Report That Less Than 1 Percent Of Dentists Nationwide Found COVID-19 Positive**

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EDWARDSVILLE - A report came out this week by the American Dental Association that is a huge endorsement for the dental profession for their extensive use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and proper COVID-19 safety precautions. The report said fewer than one percent of dentists nationwide were found to be COVID-19 positive in the report of U.S. data collected in June 2020.

The ADA COVID-19 finding was not a surprise to Edwardsville dentist Dr. Hal Patton, who also doubles as the Edwardsville mayor.

“The less than 1 percent is great news for our profession!” Dr. Patton said. “PPE really works. We screen our patients over the phone the day before the appointment. We ask them twelve questions when they get here, have them wash their hands, check blood oxygen level and temperature. No visitors are in the waiting area or rooms. We wipe down the rooms, place disposable bags, water tips, suction. Finally, we sterilize all instruments. We have seen 3,000 patients since June 1st and all is good.”

Dr. Patton said the PPE standards were already universal practices in dentistry prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic. He said it was very scary when dental practices were shut down March 16 with the Illinois COVID-19 Pandemic orders by Gov. J.B. Pritzker.

“We were closed for two and a half months,” he said. “Everybody did that for each other; it was a nationwide effort to flatten the COVID-19 curve. We continued the universal precautions after we reopened and have done more. Everybody has been super nice about the questions and having their temperature taken when the visit the dental office. We hope there is a treatment or vaccine distributed soon so we can get somewhat back to the way it used to be.”

In addition, 99 percent of dentists are using enhanced infection control procedures such as screening protocols and enhanced disinfection practices when treating patients.

“This is very good news for dentists and patients,” said American Dental Association (ADA) Science and Research Institute Chief Executive Officer Marcelo Araujo, D.D.S., M.S., Ph.D., the senior author of the report. “This means that what dentists are doing – heightened infection control and increased attention to patient and dental team safety – is working.”

Dr. Araujo added that the authors of the report, researchers from the ADA Science and Research Institute and Health Policy Institute based in Chicago, are continuing to collect and will report infection rate data on dentists and have added hygienists to their ongoing survey, in collaboration with the American Dental Hygienists Association.

This ADA report focused on nearly 2,200 dentists in June, finding that 82 percent of dentists were asymptomatic for one month prior to the survey and 16.6 percent reported getting a COVID-19 test. Those who tested positive were not clustered in any particular geographic region.

Among those not tested, less than one percent (0.32) were given a probable COVID-19 diagnosis by a physician. The authors weighted the results to align with U.S. dentists demographically and geographically and found an estimated prevalence of less than one percent (0.9) with a margin of error of 0.5 percent.