

THE VILLAGE DENTAL CENTRE

Dear Patient,

We once again hope that this email finds you and your family in excellent health. We are very much looking forward to resuming our normal services and while much has changed over the last 10 weeks, one thing remains constant: our commitment to your safety.

Infection control has always been of prime importance here at the Village Dental Centre, as you will have seen during your appointments over the years. Our infection control processes are designed so that your dental care is both safe and comfortable. We invite you to read about some of the newer procedures that we have in place to ensure that you will always receive the highest quality care.

As always, our practice conforms to all the regulations and guidelines that are published by the official healthcare bodies in England, specifically Public Health England (PHE), NHS England (NHSE) and the Faculty of General Dental Practitioners (FGDP). This updated policy outlines modifications to our normal procedures that we intend to employ once the practice reopens. It is not known at this time whether these procedures are temporary or whether they will become a permanent feature of the way dental practices must be run to ensure patient and staff safety in the future.

Of course, we greatly appreciate your assistance with any new or modified procedures at the practice.

PROVISIONAL TIMETABLE

The practice will re-open for patients who require urgent dental treatment on 23rd June 2020. This will be extended to other patient groups as the lockdown restrictions are eased further.

The Village Dental Centre Team is presently preparing the practice for reopening and rehearsing our updated procedures prior to patients returning to the practice.

We will initially be seeing:

- Patients with emergency problems or other dental problems that require urgent assessment and treatment.
- Patients with treatment that was not completed prior to the lockdown and who need urgent repair work, including those with orthodontic problems.

When the lockdown restrictions are further lifted, we will be able to see:

- Patients with treatment that was not completed prior to the lockdown and who are currently stable and free from discomfort.
- Patients who are due orthodontic reviews.
- Patients who were due for routine examinations and hygienist visits during the period of closure

PATIENT COMMUNICATION PRIOR TO REOPENING

Our reception team will start contacting patients in due course, confirming appointments ahead of their scheduled day and time. As previously requested, please do not call the practice prior to us opening unless you have an urgent dental emergency. Doing so is highly likely to cause delays in our preparations and may push back our reopening date further. Likewise, please do not attend the practice without an appointment.

MEASURES WE ARE PUTTING IN PLACE TO REDUCE THE RISK OF COVID-19 TRANSMISSION

Our normal cross-infection control protocols at The Village Dental Centre are already woven into all clinical activity carried out at the practice. Following assessment of the new professional guidelines and having carried out a comprehensive risk assessment, you will see the following changes at the practice when it is time for your next appointment:

- We will communicate with you beforehand to ask some COVID-19 relevant screening questions. This will happen through our new online Patient Portal and at the same time we will request you update Medical History forms if needed. We will also request that you pay for the scheduled treatment in advance of your appointment using our new secure online payment system. The old methods for completing medical forms and making payments will remain, we are just trying to reduce their use wherever possible for everyone's safety.
- On arrival, we request that you wait in your car/outside the practice and then please call 01273885522 to let the reception team know that you have arrived. This is to reduce the number of patients in the practice at any one time.
- At your designated appointment time we will invite you into the practice. You will be asked the COVID-19 screening questions again and we may take your temperature using a contactless thermometer. Once screened we will request that you clean your hands using the hand sanitiser provided and you will then ideally go straight into the surgery for your appointment without having to wait in the waiting room. If you have not made your appointment pre-payment, we may request you complete it at this point. This will make for a smoother departure from the practice once your appointment is complete.

- During your appointment you will notice that we are wearing different Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to that we usually wear. You have probably heard a lot about PPE over the last few weeks and please do not be alarmed by it. Although the enhanced masks can make it a little trickier to communicate, we are still the same friendly Village Dental Centre team underneath all the extra kit.
- Prior to undertaking any dental treatment, we will request you carry out a 30-60 second mouth rinse. We may also use a dental dam to isolate the tooth being treated which hugely reduces any potential risks.
- During the Sustained Transmission phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, routine dental treatments that create spray will be avoided wherever possible as per official guidance.
- During the Sustained Transmission phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, routine hygiene treatments will be carried out without the use of powered scalers, as per official guidance.
- Appointments will be managed to allow for social distancing between patients.
- For the same reason please could you attend the practice alone unless you are bringing a child for their appointment. It is better for companions to wait in cars in order to ensure adequate social distancing.
- During this period please could you limit the number of belongings that you bring to your appointment e.g. bags, coats
- We have installed a temporary Perspex screen in our reception area (like those seen in lots of shops).
- During this period, the waiting room will no longer offer magazines, cold water machine, etc, since those items are difficult to clean and disinfect.
- While our toilets are currently for urgent use only please could you please use the toilet before leaving home. The brushing of teeth is not permitted at the practice during this time, again, please complete this at home prior to leaving for your appointment.
- We will do our best to allow greater time between patients to reduce waiting times for you and to reduce the number of patients in the reception area at any one time.
- We will request that you use hand sanitiser again as you are leaving the practice.

These changes have been made to make your journey as smooth as possible and to limit the number of 'touch points' you may have whilst you are in the practice. Even though potential touch points will be frequently disinfected, by moving payments for treatment and completion of forms online, we much reduce the overall COVID-19 risk.

A FEW FINAL POINTS

One of our reception team will contact you to remind you if we have not received the relevant signed forms through the Patient Portal. If you have any difficulties with completing the forms, we can help you with this over the phone so please do not be concerned.

Importantly, if you are at risk of having possibly been infected, even if you are asymptomatic, we respectfully request you to delay booking any appointments with us for at least the recommended 14 days and possibly longer.

If we do not receive the completed questionnaire in time and we are unable to contact you, we may need to cancel your appointment. You may be charged for the appointment if we are unable to fill it at short notice as per our normal terms and conditions.

Our clinical time is going to be reduced because of this new way of working. Therefore please (as many of you already do) let us know in advance if you cannot attend your appointment. If you can please give us 48 hours' notice, we will almost certainly be able to reallocate the appointment to someone who needs it.

Furthermore, we recommend that patients in the high-risk groups for developing complications from coronavirus delay non-essential dental treatment for as long as possible until the trend of the pandemic becomes clear.

Finally, despite the financial impact of the coronavirus, the Village Dental Centre will not be increasing fees at this present time. Only if the need for extra PPE and surgery time proves to be an extended one, will we need to consider a proportionate rise in treatment fees.

TO SUMMARISE

Keeping our patients and ourselves safe from infectious diseases is not new to us. We know what we are doing and you are in safe hands. We will continue to review and update our policies over the coming days and weeks. If you have any questions regarding this policy or about your dental care at The Village Dental Centre, please do not hesitate to contact us at: reception@villagedentalcentre.co.uk

Thank you all once again for your patience and forbearance during the period of temporary practice closure and for your understanding and cooperation whilst we implement new measures at the practice. We value your trust and loyalty and we look forward to seeing you all again very soon.

Kind regards,

Shane, Nigel, Gina and all The VDC Team