

Infection Control

Universal Precautions

With increased public awareness of global bacterial and viral outbreaks, we would like to provide you with some information about how modern dental offices are required to practice infection control. Universal precautions were described in directives and guidelines issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Dental Association in 1987, and in standards published by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) in 1991. They are a 'single standard of infection control' that is used for each and every patient. These precautions require all dental staff involved in patient care to use appropriate protective garb such as gloves, masks and eyewear. After each patient visit, gloves are discarded, hands are washed with an antibacterial soap or a hand sanitizer, and a new pair of gloves is used for the next patient.

All instruments used on patients are either discarded or sterilized after every patient use. The sterilization procedure involves a series of thorough steps that are performed after each use on a single patient. The instruments are first washed. Then they are soaked in a disinfectant while run through an 'ultra-sonic' machine to further loosen any remaining particles from the instruments. Finally, they are sterilized under pressure with chemicals, or steam.