

GUIDELINES FOR ALBERTA DENTISTS FOR REMOTE CARE
DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC –
Effective May 4, 2020

These guidelines are intended to facilitate the use of remote technology and telephone to reduce patient and dentist in-person contact; to prevent unnecessary patient visits to Emergency Departments and community clinics all of which are part of the [Guidelines on Emergency and Urgent Treatment](#).

Use of remote dentistry will only be authorized during the COVID-19 Pandemic and state of public health emergency in Alberta. Its use will not be authorized in any other setting or circumstances.

Remote dentistry may increase the opportunity for prescription abuse. Ensure you are comfortable that the information you are receiving from the individual is reliable and that care is necessary to justify providing a pharmaceutical option.

REMOTE DENTISTRY IS INCLUDED IN THE PRACTICE OF DENTISTRY

When dentists provide any care, they will follow the Standards of Practice, Code of Ethics and overall expectations for quality care in Alberta.

Remote dentistry is patient care provided by using communications technologies such as telephone, email, apps, and videoconference, where the patient and provider are in different locations.

Keep in mind that you must use appropriate clinical judgment, create and maintain a [patient record](#), obtain [patient consent](#) and ensure your patient's [health information](#) is protected. If you intend to bill the patient for the remote care, ensure this is part of the consent conversation and noted in the patient record.

PRIVACY

As a requirement of the [Health Information Act](#), a health custodian must take reasonable steps to maintain administrative, technical and physical safeguards to protect the individuals' health information.

There is also a requirement to notify the Office of the Information Privacy Commissioner (OIPC) if you are implementing new administrative practices like the provision of services via remote care. This new administrative practice will allow patients to remain at home and yet have contact with their dental provider. You are still responsible for the protection of the patient's health information.

The ADA&C has notified the OIPC of this new administrative practice and the development of Guidelines on Remote Dentistry.

Dentists must continue to maintain the privacy of their patients' health information as they would in a dental clinic setting. A custodian has a duty to maintain reasonable safeguards, regardless of whether or not a patient consents to a lesser standard.

GUIDELINES

Technology for remote care

- Phone, email, texts, and other unsecured platforms such as Zoom (Pro or higher), Facetime by Apple, Skype and Teams by Microsoft, and other technology/communication apps
- While providing remote care, ensure you are in a private place where your conversation or video conference cannot be overheard or seen by others

Dentists providing remote care are to manage patient expectations

Dentists are responsible to ensure that patients understand:

- That care will be delivered remotely and how continuity of care will be handled
- How to contact the dentist, including expected response times
- What to do in an emergency situation
- How personal health information will be collected and with whom it may be shared
- Any fees related to remote care

DENTISTS ARE TO MAINTAIN A PATIENT RECORD

If you are unable to access your patient charts or your records software from your remote location, then use the following guidelines:

- Maintain a written or digital record that is dated and signed
- This record can then be saved into your charts or software at your earliest opportunity, and keep the originals for reference
- Maintain the privacy of any patient health information that is created outside of your office

HOW TO OBTAIN CONSENT TO DELIVER REMOTE CARE (TWO REQUIRED COMPONENTS)

CONFIRMING PATIENT'S IDENTITY

- For all patients, ensure that the reliability, quality and timeliness of the patient information obtained via remote dentistry is sufficient to justify providing or assisting in the provision of dental care
- You must assess if the information provided to identify or confirm a patient's identity is enough for you to proceed and that protects their privacy, such as verification questions and a scan of the patient's driver's license
- Note this in the patient record

CONSENT TO THE USE OF THE TECHNOLOGY

- Discuss with the individual that the technology you are using is unregulated and not secure
- Explain there are risks with using the technology that are beyond your control to secure
- Ensure you note in the individual's patient record you obtained verbal consent to communicate to and receive information from the patient for the purpose of providing remote care

OBTAIN THE APPROPRIATE PRE-SCREENING CLINICAL INFORMATION FROM THE INDIVIDUAL

- Obtain appropriate medical and dental history
- Confirming whether the patient's condition can be managed with over the counter medication (such as self-care and continued monitoring)
- With the patient's Alberta Health Care Number pharmacists may be able to access Netcare to assist with pharmacological history of the patient
- Obtaining the information required as if you were conducting an in-person appointment with the individual
- Providing an interim diagnosis
- Ensuring follow up communications between dentist and patient
- If the patient requires in-person care, refer to the [Guidelines on Emergency and Urgent Treatment](#) and [Dental Emergency Protocol](#) along with the use of appropriate clinical judgment
- Note this in the patient record

ALBERTA DENTISTS CAN PROVIDE REMOTE CARE TO PATIENTS IN ALBERTA

Unless they are registered in other jurisdictions, Alberta dentists cannot provide care to a patient who is receiving the care outside of Alberta.

As an example, if an individual is located in British Columbia and was seeking a prescription from an Alberta dentist, the dentist would not be able to call in a prescription to a pharmacy in British Columbia.

BILLING FOR REMOTE CARE

As with any dental procedure the dentist may use their discretion to charge a fee. If you do decide to charge a fee for remote dentistry, guidelines are provided.

After obtaining consent from the patient for any fee, members may use the following USC&LS code in the delivery of remote care. It should be made clear to patients, who may have third party coverage that some dental benefit providers may not pay/reimburse for this fee code.

- **Code 05201:** May be used for consultations with patients exceeding 7.5 minutes, utilizing a remote dentistry platform. The code includes verifying patient identity, informed consent, review of medical and clinical history, assessment of the clinical situation, interim diagnosis, remote management (e.g.: calling in a prescription, appropriate referral etc.), appropriate documentation and subsequent follow up calls
- **Use of this code will only be authorized for the use of remote dentistry during the Covid-19 Pandemic and State of Public Health Emergency in Alberta, and its use will not be authorized in any other setting or circumstances**