Provision of Emergency Care to Patients with COVID-19 During the COVID-19 Pandemic

According to the Interim Infection Prevention and Control Guidelines for Healthcare Settings, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that healthcare providers take certain precautions when providing emergency dental care to patients who are suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19. This includes following specific protocols for screening, triage, and treatment.

### Telephone Screening

Telephone triage all patients in need of emergency dental care. Assess the patient’s risk for severe illness from COVID-19, current location, and potential exposure risk.

#### Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19

- If a patient arrives at your facility and is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19, refer the patient to their medical provider.

#### Low, Unknown, or Confirmed Risk for Severe Illness

- If a patient appears to have a low risk of severe illness or it is unknown, ask the patient if they have COVID-19.

#### High Risk for Severe Illness

- If a patient has a high risk for severe illness, observe the patient for symptoms consistent with COVID-19.

### Office Screening

- In the office, screen patients for signs of respiratory illness (fever, cough, shortness of breath) using a temperature check or self-report.

### Treatment Considerations

- **Emergency Dental Care:** Provide emergency dental care when necessary. Consider the urgency of the procedure and the patient’s risk for severe illness.

### Infection Control

- **PPE:** Use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) for dental procedures.
  - **Respirators:** Use respirators for procedures that generate aerosols or splashes.
  - **Surgical Masks:** Use surgical masks for procedures that do not generate aerosols or splashes.
- **Hand Hygiene:** Implement strict hand hygiene protocols.
- **Room and Equipment:** Clean and disinfect the room and equipment according to the manufacturer’s reprocessing instructions prior to re-use.

### Operational Considerations

- **Engineering Controls:** Implement engineering controls to reduce exposure risk.
- **Work Practices:** Implement work practices to reduce exposure risk.
- **Infection Control:** Implement infection control protocols to reduce exposure risk.

### Additional Information

- **CDC:** For more information, visit the CDC’s website on emergency dental care during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **American Dental Association:** For guidelines on what constitutes a dental emergency, visit the American Dental Association’s website.

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**Revisions were made on April 7, 2020.**