



Arkansas Department of Health

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Governor Asa Hutchinson
Nathaniel Smith, MD, MPH, Secretary of Health

To: Arkansas Dentists
From: Dr. Nate Smith, Secretary of Health
Date: March 23, 2020
Regarding: Directive to Dentists to suspend non-emergent dental care

The Secretary of Health, in consultation with the Governor, has sole authority over all instances of quarantine, isolation, and restrictions on commerce and travel throughout Arkansas, as necessary and appropriate to control disease in the state of Arkansas as authorized by Ark. Code Ann. §20-7-109—110. Based on available scientific evidence, it is necessary and appropriate to take further action to ensure that COVID-19 remains controlled and that residents and visitors in Arkansas remain safe.

The Secretary of Health, as of March 23, 2020, directs and mandates that all dental practitioners follow the recommendation of the Arkansas State Board of Dental Examiners and the American Dental Association that only urgent and emergent dental care take place, and that **non-emergent dental care be suspended** until further notice. This directive and mandate is subject to change as the COVID-19 pandemic progresses.

Urgent dental care treatments, which should be treated as minimally invasively as possible, include the following:

- Severe dental pain from pulpal inflammation.
- Pericoronitis or third-molar pain.
- Surgical postoperative osteitis or dry socket dressing changes.
- Abscess or localized bacterial infection resulting in localized pain and swelling.
- Tooth fracture resulting in pain or causing soft tissue trauma.
- Dental trauma with avulsion/luxation.
- Dental treatment cementation if the temporary restoration is lost, broken or causing gingival irritation.

Other emergency dental care includes extensive caries or defective restorations causing pain; suture removal; denture adjustments on radiation/oncology patients; denture adjustments or repairs when function impeded; replacing temporary filling on endo access openings in patients experiencing pain; and snipping or adjustments of an orthodontic wire or appliances piercing or ulcerating the oral mucosa.