



COVID-19 – Guidelines for essential services

On March 17, 2020, the College sent a directive to all regulated members to stop all non-essential denture services effective immediately. Given its significance, this directive from Council has resulted in feedback from regulated members requesting clarification about the scope and application of the directive. The College is making every effort to ensure that members are kept up to date on information as it becomes available from Alberta Health and other government institutions.

To provide clarity to members, Council is providing more detailed direction. Please see below for what is considered essential and non-essential and what may or may not be performed within a denture clinic as it pertains to three areas: direct patient contact, laboratory work and virtual denture care.

Direct Patient Contact

An **essential denture service** is one where there is a complication with a fixed denture which cannot be removed by the patient. In this case, the dentist may provide the minimum service required to address the problem for the short term.

A **non-essential denture service** is any service related to a dental prosthesis that may be removed by the patient.

If a dentist is certain that an essential denture service (as defined above) is absolutely essential and cannot be delayed, the dentist must ensure that they follow appropriate screening procedures prior to the patient's presentation at their place of business and strict infection prevention and control practices must be adhered to.

Guidelines for screening, as demonstrated in the Alberta Health COVID-19 Self-Assessment (<https://myhealth.alberta.ca/journey/covid-19/Pages/COVID-Self-Assessment.aspx>) include:

- ☒ Has the patient recently returned to Alberta from outside Canada? Guidelines as to the time period for self-isolation may be found on the link above.
- ☒ Are they experiencing the symptoms below? If so, they must also self-isolate.
 - Cough, or
 - Runny nose, or
 - Fever, or
 - Sore throat

If the patient can answer yes to any of the above, please direct them to contact 811. If they need immediate medical attention related to a possible COVID-19 infection, have them call 911 and advise the operator that they may have COVID-19.

Infection prevention and control (IPC) measures are paramount. Please refer to the [College standards for IPC](#) and the [Alberta Health](#) website for additional resources.

The College expects that the regulated member will use appropriate professional judgement in implementing this screening and any services that may subsequently be provided.



Laboratory Work

It is acceptable for a denturist to continue to perform lab work, on current active cases, that do not involve patient contact. There shall be no delivery of prosthesis at this time, this includes by mailing or courier, unless necessitated in relation to an essential denture service.

Virtual Denture Care

The College would encourage denturists to communicate with their patients, at this time, through phone or videoconference to alleviate concerns that they may have. In compliance with the directive, please ensure that there is no patient contact if you choose to utilize this type of communication.

Thank you

While the measures outlined in this document may seem drastic, they are intended to limit the exposure and transmission of COVID-19 in the vulnerable patient population we serve. We do not take this decision lightly, and the College and Council thank you for your patience, understanding, and dedication to your patients and communities. Through these actions we are limiting the exposure of our vulnerable individuals we serve to this pandemic and we will continue to work through this together for the health and safety of our patients.

The College is also keeping our insurers in the loop and will be sending brief communication to alert them to the situation in Alberta and explain the decreased volume of claims being submitted.

The College and Council understands that during this difficult time in our province's history we are being met with decisions that we would have thought that we would never have had to make. The thoughts of all College staff and Council are with the membership during these trying times. As we are sure you are all aware, there is not handbook for this situation. We continue to look at each situation as it occurs and always have the best interests of the public and the profession in mind. As history dictates, this too shall pass.

The College is committed to staying in contact with its members and will be sending out regular communication to keep everyone in the loop. Monitor your email and the website for updates. We know there is lots of conversation going on out there. Dacia and Lloyd are very open to having these conversations and working through issues that you may have that arise. Should you have any questions, they may be contacted at:

Dacia (drichmond@abdenturists.ca)

Lloyd (lfischer@abdenturists.ca).