



Reopening Policy

Post Covid-19



We would like to thank all of our patients for their patience. We have been delighted to help the NHS locally by operating 11 Urgent Dental Centres across the Riverdale Healthcare Group in Yorkshire and the North East during a period when we would otherwise have needed to close. We have therefore gained vital experience in working to new guidelines and have been able to manage our patients' urgent dental needs throughout the Covid Pandemic.

This policy has been created based on multiple updated sources from within the dental and medical professions, the Government and worldwide research and evidence. It outlines modifications to our normal procedures that we intend to employ now the practice can be reopened as the COVID-19 pandemic peak has subsided. In particular we will be following guidance from The Faculty of General Dental Practitioners (FGDP) released on 1 June 2020. This guidance is designed to be flexible and protocols will change as the National Alert Level (hopefully) reduces in future weeks.

It is not known at this time whether any of these procedures are temporary or whether some of them will become a permanent feature of the way dental practices must be run to ensure patient and staff safety in the future. Riverdale Healthcare has made a substantial investment in clean air technology which has been used in South Korea since 2003 and is proven to clean the air in the surgery several times per hour removing any virus and bacteria in the air.

We are the first dental group in the UK to have installed clean air technology which will feature in practices across the Group.

We have also invested in a state of the art video consultation platform, Chairsyde, which will launch during June and will allow some consultations to be carried out remotely. Riverdale will be the first dental group to use this platform which we envisage being a part of our operating procedures long after Covid has passed.

The worldwide COVID-19 pandemic is still being evaluated and studied and policies and recommendations are likely to change in line with new scientific evidence over time. We are reassured by the worldwide research demonstrating that dental practices have NOT been a focus of Covid infection, in part, due to the excellent cross infection control they have always employed. Dental Practices have remained open in other countries throughout the pandemic and are now operating as previously with a few reasonable adjustments for social distancing and personal protection for staff and patients.

We are aware that some of our patients will have dental problems and will be wanting advice and treatment. In line with recent guidance from the CQC and GDC we are now able to offer patients appointments following revised procedures.

We will continue to respect social distancing and will therefore be prioritising patients who have been managing pain or dental problems, then completing work which was postponed in March before then seeing patients for routine care although FGDP guidance suggests some of this may need to be delayed until National alert levels fall further.

It is difficult to predict exact timescales for seeing patients as we do not know what the demand will be for more urgent treatment and when here will be further relaxation of social distancing rules (meaning more patients can be seen) or changes to the alert levels.

We will of course be providing dental care to all of our patients in the safest possible environment. We greatly appreciate your assistance with any new or modified procedures at the practice.

Please DO NOT attend the Practice to arrange an appointment – appointments must be made by Telephone – this is to respect social distancing and reduce patient contact at Reception.

Thank you for your support





Provisional Timetable

The practice will re-open for patients who require essential dental treatment on **Monday 8 June 2020**.

The Hebburn team will prepare the practice for reopening and practising our updated procedures before patients return to the practice. We will initially be seeing:

Patients with emergency problems or other dental problems that require urgent assessment and treatment;

Followed as soon as capacity allows:

- Patients with treatment that was not completed prior to the lockdown;
- Patients who were due for routine examinations and hygienist visits during the period of closure;
- Patients who are due orthodontic reviews.

In order to comply with FGDP guidance we may still need to defer some restorative and hygiene visits depending on how we can manage requirements to clean the surgery between patients. As the National Alert level falls, especially when it reaches level 2, we will be able to provide far more such treatments until then, we will do what we can when we can and we are sorry if treatment is delayed a little longer than any of us would wish. We need to follow guidance and respect that this is still restrictive.

Patient communication before reopening

We will be contacting patients and confirming appointments ahead of their scheduled time so we can assess your level of risk for coronavirus infection before you attend the practice.



New Measures To Reduce The Risk of Covid-19

Transmission

Our normal cross-infection control protocols at Hebburn Dental Care, which protect against all previously known pathogens, are already woven into all clinical activity carried out at the practice.

It should be remembered that a dental practice is already a very clean environment compared to public areas and there is no evidence of COVID-19 transmission occurring in increased rates in dentists or their team.

We have collectively evaluated all of the updated guidance and observed measures which have been put in place in other countries.

Please be assured that all of our clinical team will also be complying with our updated procedures to reduce the risk of cross infection in both directions – something we have always done.



Before Attending The Practice

We will carry out a pre-attendance assessment at least one day before your appointment to assess relative coronavirus infection risk. A dentist may also carry out a video consultation with you to assess your dental problem prior to your visit.

If we feel that you are at risk of having possibly been infected, even if you are asymptomatic, we will respectfully request for you to delay booking any appointments with us for at least one month.

We recommend that patients in the high-risk groups for developing complications from coronavirus delay non-essential dental treatment for as long as possible until the trend of the pandemic becomes clear. If you are in a high-risk group and do require treatment we will schedule your appointment at the beginning of the day.

Hebburn Dental Care will be operating contactless payment systems wherever possible. This reduces the requirement for unnecessary contact or use of pin entries on card terminals at reception.

When travelling to the practice, we would recommend that you limit close contact with other members of the public as far as possible.

Please attend the practice alone. One adult is able to attend with a child or vulnerable person; please do not bring additional family members with you unless they are happy to wait in the car or outside the building.



Arriving at The Practice

**We will only see patients who have pre-booked an appointment.
Please do NOT attend the practice to arrange an appointment.**

When you attend the practice, we will welcome you and MAY take your temperature with an ear thermometer (this recommendation is currently under review).

If your temperature is above 37.8°C, you will be asked to return home and self-isolate as per current government guidelines.

Practice Procedures

The Hebburn Dental Care team have spent time critically looking at every aspect of the practice with a view to removing all non-essential items that can potentially be the cause of infection.

You will find that the practice may appear to be quite bare when you attend. All clinical and common areas including door handles and surfaces will be regularly disinfected in addition to our normal surface cleaning protocols between patients.

Hebburn Dental Care will be providing a short buffer period between patients to allow additional time for additional decontamination procedures, allow for any treatment overruns and allow preparation time for the next patient so that they do not need to wait in the reception area. Different procedures require different buffer times which is why some procedures are more restricted than others

All future appointments will be made and confirmed by email or telephone to limit your time spent at reception.



Dental Procedures

The practice team will be using personal protective equipment in line with current recommendations and evidence.

We apologise in advance for the necessary reduction in social interaction. Whilst our masks may make us appear impersonal and distant, please be assured we are still the same friendly team underneath it all!

We are especially mindful that many dental treatments generate a degree of aerosol. This has always been the case and is one of the reasons why we wear masks. We are using a higher standard of mask and a visor which when coupled with the high- volume suction minimises our exposure to aerosol.

Our normal dental procedures can be carried out with minimal risk but will limit the number and scope of procedures in line with Government guidance.

After each patient, along with standard sterilisation of the room and equipment, we will also purify the air to ensure we are operating at the highest levels of sterilisation.

Despite the financial impact of the coronavirus, Hebburn Dental Care will not be increasing its normal fees unless absolutely necessary.

All future appointments will be made and confirmed by email or telephone to limit your time spent at reception.



Radic8 - air purification system



The vast majority of our patients are otherwise healthy without coronavirus infection and we are confident that we are able to provide dental care for these patients in as normal an environment as possible, while bearing in mind our responsibilities, to reduce risk of infection spread as far as is practically possible in line with Government Policy on social distancing and reducing face to face contact.

This policy will be constantly reviewed and updated as required by circumstances over time.

If you have any questions regarding this policy or about your dental care at Hebburn Dental Care please do not hesitate to contact us on Hebburnreception@riverdalehealthcare.com

With Kind Regards,

The Hebburn Dental Care Team