

Guideline: Inclusion of Tele-dental in Dental Hygiene Practices

The terms telemedicine and telehealth are now part of the Canadian vocabulary and are used increasingly by the medical community to provide care. Terminology such as tele-dentistry and tele-dental are lesser known but are now becoming a viable means to increase access to oral health care. The College has adopted the term Tele-dental to refer to dental hygiene practice that uses technology to increase access to care by enabling the remote provision of dental hygiene services. The College recognizes that use of tele-dental gives the public an additional tool to manage their oral health. Remote dental hygiene services that uses tele-dental can include:

1. client education, instruction, advice, or counselling;
2. assessment or evaluation (e.g., for new or existing conditions or lesions);
3. monitoring or follow-up (e.g., for existing ongoing treatment, or following recent treatment);
4. consultations and treatment planning (e.g., for new clients or those of record, and for existing or new conditions); and
5. Assessing the need for a medical or dental referral.

REQUIREMENTS FOR USING TELE-DENTAL IN YOUR PRACTICE

The use of tele-dental has potential benefits and risks for dental hygiene clients. Dental hygienists need to consider this, and if deciding to provide their services using technology, should do everything possible to ensure that all risks are minimized. Ontario dental hygienists who use digital information and communication technologies to provide dental hygiene services must continue to meet existing Standards of Practice. The professional, legal and ethical obligations that apply to oral health care that is provided in person apply equally to services provided using tele-dental.

When practising via tele-dental, Ontario dental hygienists must:

1. Hold a general or specialty certificate of registration and offer/provide services to Ontario residents only.
2. Use their professional judgment to determine whether tele-dental is appropriate and will enable them to meet all applicable Standards of Practice, legal requirements, and professional obligations.
3. Identify the resources (e.g., information and communication technology, equipment, support staff, etc.) that are required to provide tele-dental and only proceed if those resources are available and can be used effectively in each case.
4. Consider each client's existing health status, specific health-care needs, and specific circumstances, and only use tele-dental if the risks do not outweigh the potential benefits and it is in the client's best interest to do so.
5. Confirm the identity of the client and provide the client with proof of their identity and registration status (full name and registration number as they appear on the Public Register).

6. Confirm that you have their consent to provide the services that they are seeking and discuss associated costs prior to providing services.
7. Update the client's medical history or obtain an appropriate medical history, verbal history of the client's medical and oral condition and ask about their chief concerns.
8. Ensure that the reliability, quality, and timeliness of the client information obtained via tele-dental is sufficient to justify providing or assisting in the provision of dental hygiene care.
9. Use technology that will allow dental hygienists to gather necessary information needed to proceed with services. For instance, video technology aids in the assessment of oral conditions.
10. Refer to the appropriate medical or dental professional conditions that are beyond your scope of practice or area of knowledge.
11. Protect the privacy and confidentiality of the client's personal health information, specifically by:
 - i. using technology that has privacy and security settings in accordance with the [Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004](#). At minimum, technology must have controls to ensure only the intended client has access to the appointment and where personal health information is stored and/or transmitted, strong encryption must be used. If unsure, dental hygienists can confirm with the service provider that the technology meets Ontario privacy requirements.
 - ii. conducting the tele-dental appointment in a private environment that will ensure client information is not overheard or seen by other individuals; and
 - iii. confirming with the client that they are in a private setting and that the technology they are using is secure.
12. Keep appropriate records of the tele-dental appointment, in compliance with College's Records Regulation and note specifically that the care was provided through tele-dental.
13. Establish quality assurance mechanisms via ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure that care provided via tele-dental is safe, effective, and consistent with legal and professional obligations.

College publications, such as this, contain practice parameters and standards which should be considered by all registrants in the care of their clients and in the practice of the profession. College publications are developed in consultation with professional practice leaders and describe current professional expectations. It is important to note that these College publications may be used by the College or other bodies in determining whether appropriate standards of practice and professional responsibilities have been maintained.

The CDHO gratefully acknowledges the RCDSO for permitting the College to use *Covid-19: Guidance for the Use of Teledentistry* as a basis for these guidelines.

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