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TRANSCRIPT

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“Dentistry during COVID times”**

Greetings from IGIDS, Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth, Pondicherry. This is Dr. Jananni Muthu, Periodontologist and oral Implantologist. Hope this podcast finds you in good health.

Let me start with a scenario that we are facing for a couple of weeks since the lockdown has been relaxed. We find an increase in patient flow reporting to dental college (as compared to march and april). Most of the patients have one reason to report for dental treatment. We are in leave, I quote again, we are in leave. So I thought why not get my teeth cleaned. Do you think that is valid enough a reason to visit a health care facility in the times of COVID?

Imagine this, the patient comes from some 10 kms away. See the distance they have to travel. How many people they would have met on way?. Don't you think they are exposing themselves to the deadly virus? In the process, think of many contacts, including their family and the dental office professionals they are going to put at risk.

With that in mind, this podcast will highlight the roles and responsibilities of patient with dental complaint and needs during COVID time.

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has disrupted our lives in many ways. Right now, it feels impossible to predict what the world will look like next week, let alone next year. Yet behavioral science and the broad sweep of history suggest that COVID-19 will transform our daily lives in the long run.

While there are a lot of things we can't do, we can still take care of our health. With dental offices across the country postponing non-emergency dental treatment, it's more important than ever to keep up with your dental homecare.

First let me tell you why routine dental treatments are not available. Unlike medical treatments, Dental check-ups and treatments involve close contact between the dentist and patient. We literally work 6

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inches away from our patients' faces. Dentists face one of the highest risks of contracting and transmitting coronavirus, even greater than nurses or paramedics. As a result, expect your dentist to take additional safety measures if you do have to make a visit for an emergency procedure — for your protection as well as the safety of the dentist and their staff.

We would like to inform that here in IGIDS, SBV, our oral health practices are safe for our patients and staff. We want our patients to know that while any non-emergency dental procedure should wait, if an emergency requires a visit to the hospital, they can have the confidence that we're prioritizing their safety.

To help stop the spread of coronavirus, we are advising against all non-urgent dental treatment.

This includes: Dental check-ups, examinations and X rays, Preventive treatments such as teeth cleaning and polish and fluoride varnishes, Appointments for braces, Cosmetic dental treatment of any kind and treatments on teeth that are not painful e.g. fillings and extractions.

We still can be reached on the phone. These measures have been put in place to reduce the risk of spreading the coronavirus and the risk of cross-infection. Whenever possible, stay at home and help stop the spread of coronavirus. Non-necessary dental treatment is not a reason for you to leave the home.

For your safety and the safety of health care providers, please do not visit an urgent care clinic or an emergency room for your dental care needs. Please contact your dentist for guidance. Your dentist can handle many situations over the phone, such as helping with a toothache or a filling or crown that has become loose. Dental clinics may be postponing non-emergency procedures, but your dentist can still make appropriate arrangements if you need care.

Now, many of you might wonder, What are the emergencies for which I can visit the dental office? I am listing some of the conditions that require attention.

- Swelling inside or around the mouth that poses breathing/swallowing difficulties
- Swelling that has not subsided in a couple of days or is worsening
- Trauma including facial/oral laceration and falling of a permanent tooth
- Continuous bleeding after extraction of teeth for long.
- Severe dental and facial pain: that is, pain that cannot be controlled by the patient following self-help advice

Even in case of these emergencies, Please avoid visiting a dental practice without calling them first. Before agreeing to see you, dental practices might need to speak with you on the telephone. This is to check whether you are in good health and do not have any symptoms relating to the coronavirus.

Now that you have had a phone consult and an appointment fixed for examination what should you do in the dental set up / office?

- Arrive on time for appointments.
- Maintain social distancing and good hygiene while you are in the office.

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- Once you enter into the dental set up, you might be advised to visit a flu clinic and get clearance. (In case of college with attached medical checkup facilities)
- In clinics, an extensive history on travel or possible history of contacts will be your temperature will be recorded and then only entry into the office might be permitted.
- There might be a delay in permitting you inside the facility because of the strict protection guidelines that are to be followed for the wellbeing of all.
- Ensure you understand and follow any provided discharge instructions to avoid the need for unnecessary follow-up care.

General guidelines to follow for dental issues:

For pain without swelling – common over-the-counter (OTC) pain medicines can help. Contact your dentist for appropriate dosage and if the pain continues.

For pain with swelling – in addition to OTC pain medicines, rinse your mouth with warm saltwater for short-term relief. Consult your dentist for further guidance.

Tips for good oral health care:

With a lot of us working from home and adjusting to new routines, it's easy to put aside our dental health. Here are a few tips to help:

1. **Wash your hands** – aim for at least 20 seconds before and after any personal dental care
2. **Brush at least twice a day**– be sure to get those hard-to-reach spots
3. **Floss once a day** – this helps remove bacteria and plaque in places your brush can't reach
4. **Drink plenty of water** – drink water with meals and between meals
5. **Avoid smoking** – smoking limits blood flow to your mouth, making it easier for bacteria to grow
6. **Use mouthwash daily** to remove bad bacteria and keep fresh breath.

Diet matters: What you eat is also important.

- Avoid excessive snacking – a habit that's all too easy to adopt when dealing with the stress and boredom inherent in self-quarantining.
- Starchy foods or drinks lead to acid in our mouths, which dissolves tooth surfaces. The more often our teeth are bathed in these acids, the weaker and softer they become. They also act just like straight sugar and contribute to plaque buildup.
- Dentists also recommend avoiding hard foods that can crack a tooth or damage fillings as well as popcorn, peanut brittle, and sticky candy.
- There is established scientific evidence that the immune response in your body is closely related to the health of your gums. Optimal gum care is also of importance. Along with brushing, gum

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massage is also highly recommended.

In times like this, Responsible behavior is called for from the public. Please do not think you are invincible. Do not consider this lockdown as leave and take this as an opportunity to finish the non-emergency procedures you had been postponing forever till now. In case of emergency, do not panic. Have a quick phone consult and get an appointment. Keep in mind all the precautions you have to take in the dental care facility. Finally follow a good oral health care daily practices to avoid averse dental complaints.

Please stay home, stay informed and stay safe

Thank you

References:

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