

Emergency Dental Care Using Teledentistry during the COVID-19 Pandemic



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This document provides guidance for Quebec dentists on the use of teledentistry, a practice that has become necessary in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Note that this document does not authorize the use of teledentistry in any other context or circumstance.

What is teledentistry?

Teledentistry is the delivery of dental care at a distance, using information and communication technologies. All standards of practice and regulatory and professional obligations that apply to in-person care also apply to teledentistry.

Teledentistry can be delivered in a number of ways to offer various services:

Live mode of delivery: Direct interaction using communication technology (telephone, audioconference, videoconference) between a patient, a caregiver or health professional, and a dentist.

Store-and-forward: Collection of information and diagnostic elements (e.g., medical history, X-rays, photos, videos or digital impressions) by a patient, dentist or other health professional, which are then sent to a dentist or other health professional using communication technology. The information is used to assess the patient's condition and possibly provide care without the need for face-to-face interaction with the patient.

Remote patient monitoring by a third party: Medical data and diagnostic elements on a patient obtained by a dentist using communication technology and subsequently sent to a health professional, dentist or other party in a different location than that of the patient and dentist transmitting the information. The data is then used by the dentist to provide care and medical follow-up.

When can teledentistry be used?

During the state of health emergency declared by the Quebec government in the province, teledentistry can only be used:

- ♦ by dentists who are members of the Ordre des dentistes du Québec for the delivery of emergency dental care to patients living in Quebec;
- ♦ to support other health professionals in the provision of emergency care, specifically to assess patients' oral healthcare needs in order to triage them and plan next steps.

A full emergency examination in compliance with existing standards and regulations may not be possible using teledentistry alone. In cases where teledentistry is insufficient, an in-person examination may be needed. Dentists conducting these examinations or delivering care in person will need to follow the guidelines on dental procedures in dental clinics during the COVID-19 pandemic, as presented in the [decision tree](#) in effect.

Who is responsible for follow-up?

The dentist who examined, treated or referred a patient to another dentist is responsible for following up on the patient's condition after the intervention, unless the dentist transfers the management of the case to another dentist. Follow-up can include an in-person appointment with the patient, in a timely manner, during or after the pandemic.

Recordkeeping and teledentistry

Dentists should enter information in the patient's file as soon as possible after the teledentistry appointment. The entry should include the same information as a standard entry plus:

- the technological means used
- the way in which the identity of the patient was confirmed
- the location of the patient during the teledentistry appointment
- how the patient's consent to the teledentistry consultation was obtained (verbal or written)

Photographs or videos sent by the patient to better illustrate the complaint must also be entered in the patient's file.

Ideally, dentists offering teledentistry consultations should have access to patient files. During the pandemic, access to dental offices may be limited. If a dentist does not have access to patient files or if the consultation involves a new patient, the dentist must obtain another [complete medical history](#), which will need to be entered into the patient's file.

Until then, all information collected about patients must be safely stored in a manner that preserves the confidentiality of data.

IMPORTANT NOTE

It is up to dentists to choose the communication tool that will be used for sharing information.

Communicating with patients using social media of any type (Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter, etc.) is strictly prohibited.

Requirements for using teledentistry

The practice of teledentistry is identical to the practice of in-person dentistry. As such, Quebec dentists must continue to meet all existing standards of practice and the same professional, legal and ethical obligations that apply to oral care services delivered in person.

EXISTING PATIENT	
<p>If using technology <i>without</i> video</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm the identity of the patient by the sound of his or her voice¹. • Obtain the patient's consent for the teledentistry consultation. • Determine the nature of the emergency. • Review the patient's medical history and, if you do not have access to the patient's file, obtain another complete medical history. <p>Once the patient has been identified, the dentist can, according to the risk factors determined:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prescribe a medication by sending a prescription to a pharmacist or authorized person². <p>If pharmacotherapy is not indicated, the dentist can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify COVID-19 risk factors • Make an appointment with the patient for an in-person treatment at the dental clinic; or • Refer the patient to another dental clinic for the appropriate care; or • Refer the patient to a designated dental clinic where suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 can receive emergency dental care. <p>As needed, the dentist can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer the patient to another health professional for care needs that are beyond the scope of dentistry. • Refer the patient to a hospital emergency room in the event of a life-threatening condition. 	<p>If using technology <i>with</i> video</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain the patient's consent for the teledentistry consultation. • Determine the nature of the emergency. • Review the patient's medical history and, if you do not have access to the patient's file, obtain another complete medical history. • Prescribe a medication by sending a prescription to a pharmacist or authorized person. <p>If pharmacotherapy is not indicated, the dentist can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify COVID-19 risk factors. • Make an appointment with the patient for an in-person treatment at the dental clinic; or • Refer the patient to another dental clinic for the appropriate care; or • Refer the patient to a designated dental clinic where suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 can receive emergency dental care. <p>As needed, the dentist can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer the patient to another health professional for care needs that are beyond the scope of dentistry. • Refer the patient to a hospital emergency room in the event of a life-threatening condition.

¹ A patient who cannot be identified is to be considered a new patient; in such cases, requirements for new patients shall apply.

² During the pandemic, dentists are asked to send prescriptions directly to the pharmacist using one of the following ways, at the prescriber's choice:
By fax
Verbally by phone from the prescriber to the pharmacist

Requirements for using teledentistry

NEW PATIENT

If using technology **without** video

If the patient cannot be identified, the dentist must:

- Determine the nature of the emergency.
- After obtaining the contact information of the patient's pharmacist, call him or her to determine if a pharmacological treatment can be undertaken:

If this option is not available:

- Identify COVID-19 risk factors.
- Make an appointment with the patient for an in-person treatment at the dental clinic; or
- Refer the patient to another dental clinic for the appropriate care; or
- Refer the patient to a [designated dental clinic](#) where suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 can receive emergency dental care.

As needed, the dentist can:

- Refer the patient to another health professional for care needs that are beyond the scope of dentistry.
- Refer the patient to a hospital emergency room in the event of a life-threatening condition.

If using technology **with** video

- Confirm the identity of the patient by asking to see a photo ID card (driver's license, health insurance card, passport)³.
- Determine the nature of the emergency.
- Obtain another [complete medical history](#).
- Prescribe a medication by sending a prescription to a pharmacist or authorized person⁴.

If pharmacotherapy is not indicated, the dentist can:

- Identify COVID-19 risk factors.
- Make an appointment with the patient for an in-person treatment at the dental clinic; or
- Refer the patient to another dental clinic for the appropriate care; or
- Refer the patient to a [designated dental clinic](#) where suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 can receive emergency dental care.

As needed, the dentist can:

- Refer the patient to another health professional for care needs that are beyond the scope of dentistry.
- Refer the patient to a hospital emergency room in the event of a life-threatening condition.

³ If the poor quality of the video does not allow you to confirm the identity of the patient, the photo ID card can be sent by using another technological means (e.g., photo taken with a mobile phone sent by text or email) as confirmation.

⁴ During the pandemic, dentists are asked to send prescriptions directly to the pharmacist using one of the following ways, at the prescriber's choice:

By fax

Verbally by phone from the prescriber to the pharmacist

Requirements for using teledentistry

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

- ♦ Identify the resources (e.g., information and communication technology, equipment, support staff) to make sure they are available and able to be used safely and effectively.
- ♦ Use technology that will allow you to gather the information and diagnostic elements needed to provide the Service.
- ♦ Protect the privacy of the patient's personal information, specifically by:
 - explaining to the patient the potential issues with privacy related to the use of the technology selected and by obtaining the patient's consent to its use;
 - ensuring that the patient has the required knowledge to use the technology selected or that the assistance of an authorized person is available;
 - using technology that protects the privacy of the information collected and transmitted during the provision of care and, if possible, use data encryption;
 - conducting the appointment in a private environment (for both the dentist and the patient) where the patient cannot be seen or overheard by unauthorized persons.
- ♦ When access to an existing patient's file is available, the dentist must enter the information about the teledentistry appointment; if no access is available, the dentist must create a new file, which will eventually be merged with the patient's existing file. Note that the confidentiality, integrity and lifespan of information contained in the new file must be ensured.
- ♦ For new patients, create a file and enter all the information about the care delivered during the teledentistry appointment. Note that the confidentiality, integrity and lifespan of information contained in the new file must be ensured.
- ♦ All files, existing or newly created, must meet existing regulatory and professional standards that generally apply.
- ♦ When obtaining or reviewing the medical history of new or existing patients, keep in mind that some may not know the medications they are taking. You may need to contact the pharmacist or attending physician. Given the current situation, this could take longer than usual. If a complete medical history cannot be obtained and a prescription is required, the patient will need to be referred to a clinic for an in-person examination, when the proper medical and pharmacological verifications can be done in compliance with existing standards.

For questions, please call the Order at 514 875-8511 or 1 800 361-4887.