



HOW TO KNOW IF YOU ARE PROTECTED FROM INFECTIOUS DISEASE TRANSMISSION DURING DENTAL TREATMENT

A Patient's Perspective

By Mary Govoni CDA, RDA, RDH, MBA

First, observe the office environment:

- Is the office clean, neat and uncluttered?
- Is the area in the office where the dental instruments are cleaned and sterilized visible? If so, is it clean, neat and uncluttered?

Second, observe the dentist, hygienist and dental assistant:

- Do you see the dentist, hygienist and assistant wearing gloves and a face mask while they are treating you?
- Does the dentist, hygienist or assistant wash their hands or use a hand sanitizer prior to treating you? (before they put on their gloves)
- Does the dentist, hygienist or assistant wash their hands or use a hand sanitizer after they remove their gloves?

Third, ask questions about infection prevention and how you are being protected:

- Ask the dentist, hygienist or assistant how the instruments are sterilized. Will they show you the sterilization area?
- Ask how often the practice spore tests their sterilizer(s). (It should be done weekly.)
- Ask how the practice cleans and disinfects the operatory and how often this is done?
- Ask to see the instruments/instrument cassettes in their sterile packaging prior to your procedure.
- Ask if the dental hand pieces (drills) are sterilized after each use.
- Ask what the practice does with reusable items that can't be heat sterilized. (These items should be chemically sterilized.)
- Ask whether the practice ever reuses disposable items.
- Ask how the practice cleans and maintains the water quality in the dental units.
- Ask whether the doctor, hygienist and assistant have been vaccinated against hepatitis B.
- Ask how often the entire team participates in infection control training updates.

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Mary Govoni is an internationally recognized speaker, author and consultant working with dental teams for over 40 years on clinical efficiency, infection prevention, ergonomics and team communication.

Mary is a Certified OSHA Outreach Trainer and assists dental practice across the country in achieving compliance with regulatory requirements. Mary is also known for her practice approaches to implementing systems and protocols to enhance patient safety. Mary is a past president of the American Dental Assistants Association, a member of the American Dental Hygienists Association, the Organization for Safety Asepsis and Prevention, the Academy of Dental Management Consultants, the National Speakers Association and the Speaking and Consulting Network. She has published numerous articles in *Dental Economics*, *The Dental Assistant Journal*, *RDH Magazine*, *Dentistry Today*, *Inside Dentistry* and many others.

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