



Stay in touch

Anna Middleton explains ways to maintain contact with patients remotely while the practice is closed

The last few weeks have been full of anxiety, chaos and confusion, and while I don't know what the future is likely to bring, I can share how I've stayed in touch with patients during lockdown, in a bid to help them stay on top of their oral health.

Here are eight easy ways to keep in touch with patients during this time.

Notice on website

If you (or your practice) have a website, then add a notice to the home page. That way, patients or new visitors can find out how they can contact you or the practice with regards to appointments, concerns or emergencies. Mine says: 'Important update on COVID-19'; which you can click to learn more. There is a personal statement from me will all contact information as well as a link to a blog where visitors can read about how to look after their teeth at home.

Writing blogs

The internet is one of the quickest ways to access information. My search history during this time already includes things like 'how to do a headstand' and 'how to make your own pizza base'. These searches have led me to various blogs and answered my questions at the touch of a button. Think about what your patients might be searching during this time. Creating blogs with questions as a title or 'how to...' is great for search engine optimisation (SEO) as this will

then improve your website ranking. Aim for around 500 words and break the blog up into sections with headings to make it easy to read.

Email out a newsletter

If you (or your practice) have a patient database and permission following the GDPR guidelines, then send out an email explaining what you or your practice are doing during this time. Share information about self-care at home but also how they can contact you if they do have an emergency. You can also use this opportunity to guide patients to things like blogs, tutorials, guides as well as keep them updated with developments.

Create guides

When the lockdown started, I was quick to put together a 'home care manual'. It was eight points and I used pictures and shared short messages about brushing, interdental cleaning, diet and lifestyle. I shared this on my social media channels, turned it into a blog, sent it out as a newsletter and then my practices also shared it. I have seen some other fantastic guides on managing toothache and wisdom tooth pain.

Take photos

The smartphone has been a real game-changer. Use this time to practise and play with taking photos at home. You can then use these to send to patients as a visual explanation for instructions or recommendations. You can also use them on your social media channels. Check out

Canva – it's a super easy app for creating fantastic graphics and posts.

Make videos

As above. Play around. Film yourself giving advice, tips or demos. You do this every day when at work, so you know the script. Keep it short and lighthearted. I try and keep my videos to about a minute. You don't even need to edit it, but if you do programs such as Imovie or Adobe Rush make it easy.

Social media live

If you (or your practice) have an Instagram or Facebook account, then use them to communicate with your patients and the public. Host Q&A sessions and you can even do 'lives' with other people. This can be a fantastic opportunity to collaborate with other dental professionals. I have seen dentists and hygienists/therapists collaborate but also dentists and make-up artists. Combine your online followings and use this as an opportunity to reach and engage with more people.

Live chat

My practices have been holding live consultations/advice clinics. They have set up Skype or Zoom calls for if someone needs help or advice. We all know that often just some simple tips/advice can be enough to resolve an issue, but it is also nice to be able to offer reassurance for any worries or concerns a patient may have. This can help relieve other emergency services as we are able to triage patients who may have a serious emergency. [OH](#)

