

Fact sheet

July 2015

Infection control obligations under the National Law

As regulators of the profession, we act to protect the public. We take breaches in infection control standards seriously. Consequences for non-compliance with appropriate infection control measures are significant for practitioners, and may be for patients and the community.

Requirements for registered dental practitioners

Under the National Law, you must have access to and make sure your practice meets the infection control standards listed in the Board's [Guidelines on infection control](#).

This includes the National Health and Medical Research Council [Australian guidelines for the prevention and control of infection in healthcare](#).

We expect registered dental practitioners to practise in a way that maintains and enhances public health and safety, by preventing or minimising the risk of spreading infectious diseases.

Ongoing infection control education and training requirements for dental practitioners

As a registered dental practitioner, you must meet the requirements of our [Continuing professional development registration standard](#).

We also expect you to continue to maintain and update your knowledge throughout your career across all areas of your practice, and recommend that you regularly undertake a continuing professional development (CPD) course in infection control.

Doing this will help you attain and maintain contemporary knowledge of the required standards, policies and procedures in infection control, and understand the science behind these requirements.

What patients can expect of their dental practitioner

The Board and AHPRA have published '[Tips for dental patients](#)' to help patients and members of the public ensure they are receiving safe care from their dental practitioner.

We encourage patients to ask the following questions:

1. Is your dental practitioner registered?

Check the [online, national register of practitioners](#) and make sure your dental practitioner is registered and meets national standards.

2. Is your dentist wearing appropriate clothing, gloves, a mask and is there eyewear?
3. Does the surgery look clean and tidy?
4. Is there an appropriate facility the practitioner can use to wash their hands?
5. Does your dentist work with an assistant?
6. Are the instruments clean and are there disposable items as well?

You can ask your dentist if their instruments are sterilised or if they have an autoclave.

What to do if you have concerns about the infection control practice of a dental practitioner

It is usually best to resolve any problems directly with the dental practitioner if you can. If you still have serious concerns, you can make a complaint to the regulator in your state or territory:

Your location	Regulator	Phone
ACT, NT, SA, Tas, Vic and WA	AHPRA and the Dental Board of Australia	1300 419 495
NSW only	Healthcare Complaints Commission in NSW	1800 043 159
Qld only	Office of the Health Ombudsman in Queensland	1800 043 159

How complaints of alleged substandard infection control procedures are investigated

If a complaint is made about you, the regulator handling the matter will ask you to provide evidence of compliance with the Board's [Guidelines on infection control](#). Your dental practice may be inspected.

The type of evidence that you will be asked to provide initially may include:

- a copy of the infection control manual used at the practice that sets out the protocols and procedures
- evidence that you and all relevant staff have access to this manual
- photographs that demonstrate the layout of and the equipment in the sterilisation area of the clinic, and
- copies of print-outs from the autoclave(s) demonstrating the results of all cycles over a period of time.

Regulators may also investigate your compliance with the Board's guidelines even if the original concern was not related to infection control.

More information

- Lodge an [online enquiry form](#)
- For general enquiries: 1300 419 495 (within Australia) +61 3 9275 9009 (overseas callers)