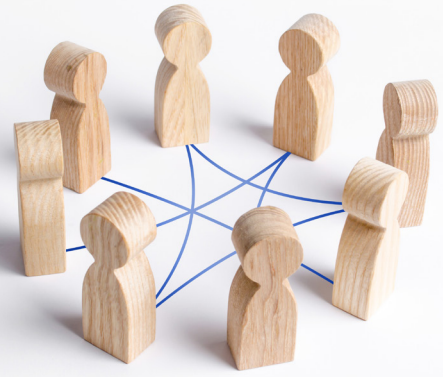


Guide to Making Care Calls



What is a care call?

As the dental profession continues to process the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and dental hygiene appointments are cancelled, the importance of oral health may recede further from clients' minds. A care call is an opportunity for the dental hygienist, as part of the dental team, to reach out to their clients during this uncertain time. Care calls let clients know they are being thought of, and they provide an opportunity for the dental hygienist to ask about home oral care routines, answer questions, and reassure clients that the office will not reopen until it is safe to do so.

Before making any care calls, it is important to have a conversation with your employer and to collaborate with other members of your team to ensure a consistent message is given to clients. CDHA has developed a video series titled *Conversations to Build Collaborative Workplaces*, which provides guidance on how to communicate effectively with employers, co-workers, and clients. Please watch the following videos for more detailed information on care calls:

[What is a Care Call?](#)

[How to Have a Care Call](#)

[Scenario of a Care Call](#)

What are the benefits of care calls?

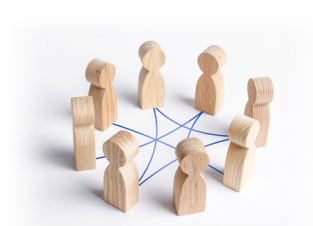
Care calls are a quick and easy way for the dental hygienist to:

- Remind clients about the importance of their oral health
- Enhance relationships with their clients
- Reassure clients the office will only reopen once a safe environment is possible
- Increase the likelihood that clients will schedule an appointment once dental hygiene treatment resumes

Why is a dental hygienist best suited to make care calls?

Dental hygienists develop a rapport with their clients during appointments, learning about their families, their travels, their careers. Clients trust their dental hygienists as their oral health care providers and often share their triumphs and tribulations with them. The dental hygienist is aware of each client's needs and can answer questions and make individualized oral care recommendations.

Guide to Making Care Calls



How do I prepare?

- Determine a message on infection control with your employer and dental team so that everyone shares the same information with clients. You will want to assure clients that, just as before the COVID-19 pandemic, infection control protocols will be followed strictly, and the office will be safe for clients and staff.
- Review your notes in the client's chart from their previous appointments to determine what OHI was discussed.
- Prepare a list of resources to share with your clients as appropriate. You may want to include names of mouth rinses, interproximal aids or toothpastes you would recommend. You may also want to provide links to websites such as [Dental Hygiene Canada](#) for additional information.
- Draft an outline of your call so you feel prepared.
- Practise what you will say so you feel at ease when you call your clients.

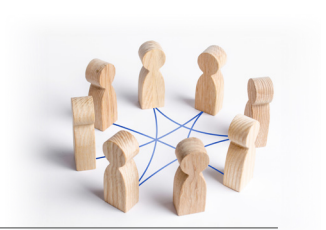
Whom should I call first?

1. Clients with active periodontal disease
2. Clients who had appointments in your schedule from the date of the shutdown until now
3. Clients who have active treatment plans
4. Clients who are booked in your schedule from today's date until 6 months from now
5. Clients who have been seen in the last year, but are not in the schedule

What is the outline for a care call?

- When speaking to the client, ask how they and their family are doing. You know them, so talk to them as you would at their appointment.
- Talk with them about the home oral care recommendations made at their last appointment.
- Ask if they have any questions about their home oral care or if they have any concerns about their teeth or gums (bleeding, sensitivity to cold), and provide guidance and direction as appropriate.
- Offer reassurance that when they return for their regular appointments the office will be safe.
- If your office is currently providing emergency treatment, let the client know that they should call the office if they have a dental emergency.
- Provide them with a contact number or email address if they have questions at a later date.
- After the call, make progress notes documenting the conversation.

Guide to Making Care Calls



What do I do if a client expresses that they or someone they know has been directly affected by COVID-19?

- Remain empathetic, listen to what they share, express condolences if necessary.
- Make a note in the client's chart about their exposure to (or recovery from) COVID-19.

Care calls are a great opportunity to connect with your clients, to demonstrate that you and the dental team are thinking of them, to remind them of the importance of oral health, and to reassure them that their health and safety are paramount when the dental office reopens. Making care calls benefits you, the office, and ultimately your clients.