



AAE FACT SHEET

The following fact sheet was prepared by the AAE Research and Scientific Affairs Committee to address issues being raised by some endodontic patients. AAE members may photocopy this fact sheet for distribution to patients or referring dentists.

PRECAUTIONS FOR PATIENT SAFETY

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires that all dental offices, including endodontic offices, follow infection control guidelines established by the U.S. Public Health Service Centers for Disease Control (CDC). The CDC guidelines define procedures, known as universal precautions, to prevent the spread of all bloodborne infectious diseases. The American Dental Association (ADA) and the American Association of Endodontists (AAE) uphold these universal precautions as the standard for infection control in all dental and endodontic offices.

AAE member endodontists understand that universal precautions are effective techniques for protecting their patients, their office personnel, and themselves from contracting disease in the endodontic office. The precautions taken include:

- ◆ Washing hands and putting on single-use gloves before seeing each patient;
- ◆ Wearing protective masks, eyewear, and overgarments;
- ◆ Sterilizing and disinfecting all instruments and handpieces;
- ◆ Disposing of needles and other sharp items in special containers;
- ◆ Cleaning and disinfecting all treatment surfaces and equipment between patients and covering surfaces and equipment with disposable protective coverings when possible; and
- ◆ Testing sterilization equipment regularly for effectiveness.

Endodontic therapy presents very little chance for cross infection when the treatment team makes recommended infection control procedures part of the office routine. In endodontics, the patient receives additional protection from the use of the rubber dam, a thin sheet of latex that isolates the tooth or teeth being treated. This latex protects the rest of the mouth and throat from the instruments and solutions used to perform treatment. In addition, the rubber dam keeps the treatment area free from saliva and other contaminants during the procedure. As further protection against the spread of infection, the endodontist uses irrigating solutions to disinfect the canal system inside the tooth.

Endodontists have adhered to high standards for cleanliness and proper sterilization for many decades. Safety procedures are reviewed and updated regularly as new techniques become available.

Should you have further questions about the specific infection control procedures followed during your treatment, ask your endodontist. The AAE and your endodontist are committed to your continued health and safety.