

Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020

Dear patient,

We hope this letter finds you and your family in good health.

You may have heard that many dental practices, including Thornhill Dental, are now reopen. Although we are now open again we want to be clear that due to enhanced regulations for the coronavirus pandemic this is not "business as usual". The treatments you are offered will be different to those you received before, depending on staff and equipment available. It will take some time before services return to what you previously experienced as 'normal'. Please be patient and please bear with us.

From Monday 6<sup>th</sup> July we will enter **phase 2** of our return to normal operations and we will be offering the following services for most patients:

- Urgent care
- Follow up care for patients phone triaged during closure
- Treatment for patients with outstanding treatment needs prior to closure
- Routine dental health checks (recall dates to be staged)
- High priority hygienist periodontal services

Currently we are not providing treatments that are classed as "Aerosol Generating Procedures" (AGPs). These include treatments using a high speed drill and ultrasonic scaler. Any patients requiring urgent treatment which is classed as an AGP will be referred to a dedicated NHS Urgent Dental Care Centre.

We can still carry out treatments such as semi-permanent fillings, simple extractions, some denture work and some crown/bridge re-cements. We can also offer plaque removal with our skilled dental hygienists using non-AGP hand instruments.

We hope to increase the number of services and treatments we offer further in **phase 3**. The date we will move into phase 3 will be set in due course based on the progress of the coronavirus pandemic and maintaining safe operations at Thornhill Dental.

Thornhill Dental will operate as a COVID-19 free zone. This means that we will be unable to see any patients with confirmed or possible cases of COVID-19 or patients who share a household with anyone with confirmed or possible cases of COVID-19. These patients will be referred to a dedicated NHS Urgent Dental Care Centre following telephone triage with one of our dentists.

Not all services may be available to patients who are shielded (those who are at most significant risk from COVID-19). These patients will be risk assessed over the telephone with one of our dentists to check that the service is appropriate for their vulnerability to COVID-19.

Our community has been through a lot over the last few months, and all of us are looking forward to resuming our normal habits and routines. While many things have changed, one thing has remained the same: **our commitment to your safety**.

Infection control has always been a top priority for our practice and you may have seen this during your visits to our surgery. Our infection control processes are made so that when you receive care, it's both safe and comfortable. We want to tell you about the infection control procedures we follow in our practice to keep patients and staff safe.

Our practice follows infection control guidelines made by the governing bodies. We are up-to-date on new guidance that has been issued. We do this to make sure that our infection control procedures are current and adhere to recommendations.

You may see some changes when it is time for your next appointment. We made these changes to help **protect our patients and staff**. For example:

- Our practice will ask some screening questions on arranging your appointment and again (via convenient SMS system) within 24 hours of your appointment. You'll be asked those same questions again at your appointment
- We no longer offer magazines in our waiting areas since those items are difficult to clean and disinfect
- We will perform a temperature check on you prior to entering the practice
- Appointments will be managed to allow for social distancing between patients. That might mean that you're offered fewer options for scheduling your appointment
- Staggered appointment times to avoid arrival and departure of multiple patients at the same time
- Entry and exit from the practice through separate doors
- Payment will only be taken by card (no cash payments)
- Payment will be taken in advance of your appointment over the telephone to minimise time at the practice and physical contact
- Introduction of a full time telephone triage dentist to discuss dental problems with patients remotely and avoid the need for unnecessary visits. This dentist can provide remote advice, remote prescriptions and referral for face to face treatment at Thornhill Dental or a dedicated NHS Urgent Dental Care Centre

Please be aware that appointments are booked at set times and set lengths in order to minimise the number of patients in the building and the interaction between those patients. This means that we do not have any capacity to overrun on appointments. If you have any issues you wish to speak to your dentist about, please tell us when you contact us to arrange your appointment and one of our dentist team will contact you to discuss this over the telephone and avoid the need to spend time discussing it in the practice.


How you can help:

- Attend alone where possible or with a single carer, parent or guardian if necessary
- Complete all your arrival forms online using our portal prior to your arrival (e.g. medical history forms, NHS forms, contact details)
- A social distance of at least 1m (2m where possible) should be observed if another patient is present in the dental practice
- Do not shake team members hands
- If you show symptoms following appointment booking, you should contact the practice by phone
- Arrive on time for your appointment. If necessary, you should wait outside the practice or in your car. You should alert our team of your arrival using a door bell at the main entrance
- Do not arrive without an appointment
- Come wearing a mask if possible or may be asked to wear one

- Use hand sanitiser provided as you enter and leave the practice
- Bring your own pen for completing any forms

Thank you in advance for your cooperation and understanding during these difficult times and we look forward to welcoming you back to Thornhill Dental very soon.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andy Tattersfield', with a horizontal line underneath.

Andy Tattersfield  
PRACTICE MANAGER