

Hand Touch Surfaces of Risk in your Dental Practice

Where are they and how do you clean them?

In a dental practice hand touch surfaces are a high-risk zone, because so many people touch them. They are also the ones people tend to forget about as they are in the public spaces, reception area, waiting room, handrails, door push plates/handles, the public toilets, water cooler dispenser handle etc. Here are some quick and easy ways to manage these zones and reduce the spread of infection.

Key locations to focus on:

- Doors and handles: Your entrance, washroom ~~door~~ and surgery doors.
- Reception Desk including just under the ledge.
- Handrails at steps etc.
- Public washroom, especially door handles, taps and toilet handle.
- Credit card terminal
- Pens and clipboards
- Internal intercoms

Frequency: The more frequent the better, especially in high traffic locations, but this requires an all hands-on deck approach.

Few dental practices will have onsite cleaning staff the whole of the working day. Note that once a day is not enough. It should be at least 3 to 4 times a day; more frequent in larger, busy practices.

Hand Hygiene: Have a good station at the entrance with a good quality hand sanitiser (if the gel burns you when you use it, get a better one). This station is for everyone, public and staff.

Locate a station at your reception, for people to use as they approach your staff. You will find the public really get behind it and do use it automatically.

Hand Touch Surfaces: Reception desk, waiting room hard surfaces (especially the edges), door plates / handles, and taps in washrooms, front door etc.

Get into the habit of having staff (including yourself!) quickly doing a two-stage wipe down the most frequent hand touch surfaces. First use a mild detergent and water on a microfibre cloth, follow this by using a disinfectant on a second cloth. **Don't use the same cloth everywhere as this just helps spread disease further.** Alternatively use a disposable 3-in-1 wipe.

Furniture: handles and arm rests are problem areas. Easily wipeable if hard, but less so if soft material.

Make it obvious to your patients that you are taking infection control seriously by showing that you have increased the cleaning of your public areas and increasing the hand hygiene stations. If it's made obvious and regular, it's simply part of your great service, and not because there is a problem.

Write all these changes up in a short protocol and put it on your compliance file, and training file. That way, it can also help show your commitment to best practice, should an inspector ask for it.

Finally, the best way to get your staff buy-in is to lead by your example.