

Why is the MDA strongly recommending COVID-19 vaccinations for dentists and dental assistants?

The current evidence indicates that the COVID-19 vaccines offered in Manitoba are an effective preventative tool against COVID-19. Due to our ongoing contact with vulnerable populations, we are in a position of trust with the public and, therefore, must exhibit the highest standards of practice, care, and ethics. As providers of essential healthcare, it is important for us to support policies set forth by Manitoba Health.

The Manitoba Dental Association regulates the professional practices of dentists and registered dental assistants, not all dental office staff. As an employer, you are required to provide a safe workplace for all staff and the public that attend your clinic. It is paramount to engage only in the safe delivery of oral health care. Dentists who have questions about HR policies related to vaccinations for their staff are encouraged to seek independent legal advice.

Can a patient ask about the vaccination status of myself or my staff?

Patients have the right to ask about the vaccination status and are free to choose the oral health provider on whatever basis they desire. It is important to keep in mind that this is personal health information and therefore confidential and private. If a patient asks a dentist or their staff about their vaccination status for COVID-19, neither the dentist nor their staff are obligated to reveal this information.

When asked by a patient, a health care worker can choose to disclose their own vaccination status, if they wish. Consent from staff must be obtained before sharing their information. Should dentists wish to discuss this subject with their patients, it is appropriate to do so in person and not by advertising in anyway including but not limited to posts on social media.

Can I refuse to treat patients who are not vaccinated or refuse to disclose their vaccination status?

No. Dentists, in serving the public may exercise reasonable discretion in selecting patients for their practice – being unvaccinated or refusing to disclose status is not a legitimate reason to refuse or discontinue care of a patient. Competent patients are entitled to make the decision to not be vaccinated. This cannot be used as a reason to deny dental care. Such patients should be encouraged to seek advice from their medical doctor to obtain evidence-informed recommendations pertaining to vaccinations.