

You Can Never Be Too Safe

Last week I went to the gas station to fill up my car (I won't tell you about gas prices in Washington) and not only exchanged money with the attendant, I also purchased some snacks. Before I went to open my peanut butter M&Ms, that's when my wife hit my hand and said, "you just pumped gas and forgot to sanitize your hands!" Not only did I forget to use hand sanitizer because I was rushing, I absolutely didn't wash my hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds.

This time more than ever we need to place a heavy focus on our safety and the safety of others by making sure we follow the guidance that's been provided to us. Now, running a practice is very different than pumping gas, however, there's a commonality around a bigger question that is continuously asked, which is, "how can I keep myself, my loved ones, and my businesses safe when I re-open?"

Many of you may be at different stages; your practice is closed, you've reduced your staff, you are still open or you're thinking of staying open. Regardless of where you are, at some point re-open may be top of mind, so I'll break it down into sections, the actions you should consider when it comes to safety protocol for re-opening -

The Practice

- Make sure there is an adequate supply of soap, disinfectants, hand soap, sanitizer, paper towels and tissues – take an inventory on these items and make sure you have enough to clean and disinfect surfaces.
- High touch areas should be cleaned and disinfected throughout the day.
- Confirm the type of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that you have available – face masks, face shields, gloves and glasses – N95s are hard to come by; however, facemasks of any kind can be used including washable cloth masks as well.
- Ensure onsite health screening for employees and patients with a non-touch thermometer.
- Consider having home self-screening by employees as well.

Employees

- Build policies and procedures around safety and share with staff as a Pre-Return to work training.
- Train employees on the proper ways for cleaning and disinfecting high touch practice surfaces, for example – tables, desks, countertops, doorknobs, light switches, practice and lab equipment, office phones and cell phones, computer screens, keyboards, and restrooms – toilet, faucets, sinks.
- Once employees return to work, host a Day 1 training or orientation to review the Safety Protocols or Playbook (e.g. taking temperature, fitting mask, cleaning and disinfecting surfaces, review self-screening checklist).

Patients

- Send your high-level plan for ensuring practice safety to your patients.
- Ask patients if they are exhibiting any signs of coronavirus or if they are feeling ill.
- Take patients temperatures before they enter the practice using a non-touch thermometer.
- Limit the number of people in the Practice – it is advised that if the patient can come alone that is best, unless the patient needs assistance during appointments.
- Provide sanitized trays to place frame selections.

- Doctors and staff should make it a continued practice to wash their hands for at least 20 seconds.
- Clean and disinfect all equipment and surfaces after each exam.

You always want to err on the side of caution. If you're wondering if you disinfected the keyboard, it doesn't hurt to disinfect the keyboard again. Having a checklist, policies and procedures along with training will help keep you organized and more at ease knowing you cleaned, disinfected and followed the right protocol to ensure safety for everyone around you.

IDOC has created a Safety Protocol Guide which can be found on the IDOC COVID-19 Resources Center.