

Most states dictate what your dental practice should include in their emergency management plan, including CPR certifications and external defibrillators. This article will provide a general overview of emergency management, be sure to check with your state dental board for specific requirements in your state.

The first step to managing emergencies and adverse events is creating a written plan, designating staff members responsible and practicing the plan. Additionally, be prepared by having the appropriate medical kit at your disposal. Your kit should be consistent with your emergency management training and include only supplies and equipment you are competent and permitted to use in an event. Your staff must be part of the response plan and follow their responsibilities as outlined in the plan. They should also be familiar with your medical kit and be properly certified and current in CPR, or as per state regulations.

Create the Emergency Management Plan:

1. Include an office policy and protocol regarding responsibilities and directives for the staff.
2. Post responsibilities in a common area so everyone is aware of them.
3. Mandatory periodic training and practice will help prepare for an event and reinforce staff responsibilities. Include any temporary or part time employees in the training and practice.
4. All supplies should be replaced at expiration, oxygen tanks refilled as needed and have a validation tag, and AED batteries monitored and replaced as needed. In addition, replenishment and disposal should take place during this check.
5. Be sure that oxygen is in working order by testing. It is recommended to have a mobile unit so the oxygen can be moved to where the unexpected event is taking place.
6. Proper storage and disposal of blood borne pathogens.
7. Preventative vaccinations and proper protective equipment for employees and practitioners.
8. Document in the procedure manual all these actions have been performed by the Officer responsible for emergency care.

Recognizing risks in your patients is a key step to preventing unexpected events. By taking extra precautions before, during and after patient appointments, your practice may prevent complications. Always take a thorough medical evaluation, on all patients, but especially those considered in higher risk categories. Constantly update the patient's medical history before any phase of treatment. A physical assessment of your patient when they arrive for the appointment must also be completed.

Recognizing Patient Risk Signs:

1. Patients with complicated medical histories or who are medically compromised should have treatment plans reviewed by several staff members for accuracy.
2. The elderly and young patients
3. Patients who are under high stress or are nervous during the appointment.

Site Source: <http://www.ada.org/en/member-center/oral-health-topics/medical-emergencies-in-the-dental-office>

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4. Long, complicated procedures
5. Patients who have undergone recent surgical procedures, are debilitated or are currently undergoing cancer therapy/chemo.
6. Patient who have multiple drug regimens

The following is an example of a medical emergency protocol:

1. Staff member calls the code for an emergency.
2. Business Office Manager/Receptionist activates the Emergency Management System, dismisses all patients and waits for the arrival of the EMS Unit to escort them to the office.
3. The Doctor is the team leader who identifies and confirms the code assigning the appropriate staff to perform tasks.
4. Staff members follow their responsibilities. Dental Assistant brings the emergency kit and oxygen, Hygienist brings the AED and the assigned team members begin CPR, if indicated. This team is known as the Rapid Response Team.
5. The Rapid Response Team continues care until handed off to the EMS unit.
6. Staff notifies patient's family members and the Physician in charge.
7. Follow up with care by contacting the patient afterwards and assuring them their health is paramount and continued dental care will be provided when they are ready
8. Document all events comprehensively and immediately in the records.

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