A self-reflective tool for infection prevention and control

1 July 2022

Introduction

The Dental Board of Australia (the Board) expects all registered dental practitioners to practise in a way that minimises the spread of infection.

Your professional obligations are outlined in the Board's registration standards, codes and guidelines. The onus is on you to be aware of and comply with these, and other legal or regulatory requirements relating to infection prevention and control.

You must comply with professional, legal and regulatory requirements, even where the responsibility for infection prevention and control tasks is shared with other practitioners or practice staff, and even where you are not the practice owner

More information, including a fact sheet, is available on the Board's infection prevention and control webpage. This tool should be read in conjunction with these documents.

Purpose

Maintaining and developing knowledge, skills and professional competency are key to good practice. Self-reflection and participation in professional development, practice improvement and performance appraisal can help you continually develop professional capabilities.

This self-reflective tool can help you identify areas for development or improvement in your infection prevention and control practices. The tool is designed to be used across a wide range of practice settings. Completing the tool is not required by the Board under any registration standard, code or guideline.

How to use the self-reflective tool

To use the self-reflective tool, you need to:

- reflect on your practice and consider the questions and statements in the document
- make notes against the question or statement (where applicable)
- identify gaps in your knowledge, skills, systems and protocols
- make an improvement plan.

The more you consider and reflect and the more detail you write, the more useful the tool will be. You can use it as often as you like. For example, you could consider using it as part of planning for your continuing professional development (CPD) cycle.

The tool can help you talk about infection prevention and control with your teams, mentors and other colleagues. This can be in peer-based and CPD settings.

In many places of practice, infection prevention and control tasks are not solely managed by dental practitioners. You can use this tool to reflect on whether the systems and processes in your place of practice are adequate.

This tool is not a substitute for the Board's standards, codes and guidelines, or a definitive list of infection prevention and control requirements. This is not an audit tool. The notes you make are for your own purposes. It will help you reflect on your practice and assess whether you need to improve your practice, but it will not state whether you meet the requirements.

Reflect on your infection prevention and control practices by responding to these questions

Name: **Date:**

Tips for answering the questions

1. List the information sources you use to guide you on infection prevention and control. Check the information is current and evidence-based.
2. Check you understand what legal or regulatory requirements apply in your state or territory.
3. Check the policies and procedures used in your place of practice. You should ensure they are consistent with evidence-based guidelines and legal or regulatory requirements.
4. When answering the questions below, consider how your practice compares to the evidence-based guidelines and legal or regulatory requirements.

Key components of infection prevention and control	Question	My response
Pre-treatment screening and management of infection risks	Describe your protocols and procedures for pre-treatment patient screening for transmissible infections and management of the risk to others.	
Environmental infection risks	Describe how you evaluate and minimise the environmental infection risks associated with your practice, e.g. new and existing equipment, medical devices and products.	
Clean environment	Describe how you maintain a clean and hygienic environment, e.g. • separation of clean/contaminated sections of the clinical area • cleaning the clinical area • instrument and medicament storage • waste disposal • maintenance of equipment • water line management.	
Handwashing and hand hygiene	Describe how you maintain adequate handwashing and hand hygiene as part of your practice.	
Linen management	What policies apply to linen laundering (eg. laundering of gowns) and management at your place of practice?	

Key components of infection prevention and control	Question	My response
Standard and transmission-based precautions	Can you describe how and when you apply standard and transmission-based precautions? What is your rationale?	
	Are you familiar with contact, droplet and airborne precautions, and when to apply them?	
Personal protective equipment	Describe the training, protocols and procedures you use to wear and use PPE.	
Invasive medical devices[1]	Describe your use and management of invasive medical devices (where applicable).	
Use of single-use medical devices[2]	Describe your protocols and procedures for the use and disposal of single-use medical devices.	
Aseptic technique	Reflect on your understanding of the background and application of aseptic technique.	
	Describe the circumstances for when you would use a surgical aseptic technique (e.g. when would you use surgical/sterile PPE)?	
Management of sharp injuries	Describe how you minimise the risk of sharps injuries in your practice.	
	What steps do you take to address any sharps injuries that occur?	
Management of blood/body fluid exposures	Describe how you manage the risk of exposure to blood or body fluid in your practice.	
	What steps you take to address any blood or body fluid exposures that occur?	

---

[1] 'Invasive medical devices' include, for example, catheters inserted for drainage (e.g. urinary catheters). They are not routinely used in dental practice.
[2] 'Single-use medical devices' includes instruments or items used in dental practice that are intended to be used only once and then discarded.

A self-reflective tool for infection prevention and control

Key components of infection prevention and control	Question	My response
Communication	How do you ensure patients are aware of infection risk and the prevention and control of infection after treatment?	
Waste management	Are you aware of the waste management requirements of the relevant regulatory authority that apply to your place of practice?	
	Describe the waste management procedures used in your practice.	
Reprocessing of reusable medical devices[3]	Describe how you (or those with delegated tasks) clean, reprocess, store and transfer reusable medical devices.	
	How does this compare with manufacturers' guidelines and relevant and current national and international standards?	
	Describe your processes and frequency for testing, validation and maintenance of reprocessing equipment.	
	Describe your processes for reusable equipment, instruments and medical devices that allow you to identify[4]: • the patient • the procedure • the reusable equipment, instruments and medical devices that were used for the procedure	
Antimicrobial stewardship (for all practitioners, whether they prescribe,	Describe the strategies you use to minimise antimicrobial resistance. Have regard to factors such as: • the use of national evidence-based guidelines for antimicrobial use in Australia	

---

[3] 'Reusable medical devices' include reusable instruments and equipment commonly used in dental practice.

[4] For example, batch control identification is commonly used in dental practice

Key components of infection prevention and control	Question	My response
supply, administer and/or advise patients about antimicrobials)	- judicious use of antimicrobials - communication with team members about their role in antimicrobial stewardship - engagement with and education of patients - diagnostic testing and clinical decision-making - working in multidisciplinary teams.	
Reporting and investigation of adverse events	Describe how you investigate and report adverse events relating to the spread of infectious diseases.	
	Describe how you report or communicate infection risk both within your practice and to others outside your practice.	
Governance, monitoring and quality improvement	What systems does your organisation use to monitor and improve infection prevention and control practices?	
	What measures or indicators help you assess and improve the safety and quality of your infection prevention and control practices? Have regard to factors such as (but not limited to): - percentage of staff that have received infection prevention and control training within the past 12 months - percentage of staff with up to date immunisations - number of adverse events or near misses relating to infection prevention and control - audit results - trends or patterns in infections	
	What infection outcome and process surveillance, including analysis and reporting, do you carry out?	

A self-reflective tool for infection prevention and control

Key components of infection prevention and control	Question	My response
Delegation of tasks for infection prevention and control	Consider who has accountability and responsibility for various infection prevention and control tasks in your place of practice.	
	What training in infection prevention and control has been completed by those carrying out these tasks?	
Respiratory hygiene, cough etiquette and physical distancing	Describe the respiratory hygiene, cough etiquette and physical distancing practices used in your practice.	
Resource supply and availability	How do you/your organisation ensure adequate supply and availability of resources for infection prevention and control? e.g. personal protective equipment (PPE), equipment, materials.	
	How do you/your organisation ensure these resources are safe and effective and able to fulfil their intended purpose?	
Practitioner health	How do you minimise the risk of infection to others if you, staff or colleagues have an infectious disease?	
	Are you aware of your blood-borne virus status and the requirements of the Board's *Guidelines - registered practitioners and students in relation to blood-borne viruses*?	
Immunisation	How do you identify which immunisations are required and ensure your immunisation status is up to date?	
Infection prevention and control guidance and knowledge	Describe the information sources you use for infection prevention and control in your practice.	
	How do you select these sources?	

A self-reflective tool for infection prevention and control

Key components of infection prevention and control	Question	My response
	Are they current and evidence-based?	
	Do you understand your responsibilities for infection prevention and control?	
Preparedness for emerging infection prevention and control issues and responses to pandemics	How do you and others in your place of practice stay informed about, and adapt to, emerging infection prevention and control issues, including responses to pandemics and other public health concerns?	
	Do you know if staff members or colleagues have other workplaces that may cause them to be at risk of the spread of infectious diseases?	
Continuing professional development	What continuing professional development (CPD) in infection prevention and control have you completed, and when?	
	Who is responsible for reviewing and educating practitioners on infection prevention and control, or providing subject matter expert advice, in your place of practice?	

Consider your responses and how they can help you to address any gaps in your knowledge, skills, systems or protocols.

A self-reflective tool for infection prevention and control

What to do if you identify gaps

Suppose you reflect that your knowledge and skills about infection prevention and control or the systems and protocols you use are below expected standards for practice. In that case, you should take steps to address this.

You could:

- review the Board's fact sheet on infection prevention and control for practitioners
- seek advice from government health departments, statutory entities, professional associations, your professional indemnity insurer, your employer or private consultants
- do mentoring, education or other learning activities
- seek advice from your peers or colleagues.

Consider setting learning, development or improvement goals to help you address any gaps you identify. Make sure that your goals are:

Specific	Your goals should outline clearly and in detail what you want to achieve
Measurable	You should be able to track or measure whether you have achieved the goal
Attainable	The goal should be realistic and capable of being carried out
Relevant	The goal should relate to your objectives, in this context, to addressing the gaps and improvements you identified after completing this tool
Time-oriented	Set a date by which you achieve your goal, to help keep you accountable

Completing education or other activities to improve your infection prevention and control practices can count towards CPD. Information and resources on the CPD requirements, including guidance on choosing a CPD activity, are available on the Board's website.