

1. What happened?

In response to a complaint, the Washington State Department of Health – Dental Quality Assurance Commission (DQAC) conducted an infection control inspection at George M. Davis Dental Clinic. The inspection identified multiple infection control problems including the cleaning, disinfection, sterilization, and storage of reprocessed dental instruments. Inadequately cleaned and sterilized instruments might have potentially spread infections to patients during dental procedures. We're advising anyone who was a patient at this clinic to talk to your healthcare provider about whether you should be tested for hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and HIV infection.

2. What is the possible risk to patients?

Public Health does not know of any infections associated with this clinic. But we know that inadequately cleaned and sterilized instruments can spread infections to patients during dental procedures. It's unlikely but possible that someone could have become infected with hepatitis B, C, or HIV from a contaminated instrument.

We don't have dental records for any individuals, and we don't know the exact risk to each patient. Overall, the risk of infection is likely to be low for most patients. As a precaution, Public Health advises anyone who was a patient at the George M. Davis Dental Clinic to talk to their health care provider about testing for hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and HIV. Any patients who might have had more invasive procedures (such as extractions or procedures requiring shots in the mouth) may be at higher risk and should be sure to consult with their health care provider.

3. Why are you notifying patients through the media?

We believe that patients have a right to know when problems in a healthcare facility may have possibly caused them significant harm, even if the risk is not high. We want patients to have the information about the situation so they can make informed health decisions. We are making a public announcement because we do not have the information we need to contact the patients who may have been exposed individually.

4. What types of infections might possibly be transmitted from inadequately cleaned dental instruments?

The main infections of concern that could possibly be transmitted are hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and HIV.

5. What are the symptoms of infection from hepatitis or HIV?

Symptoms of hepatitis include abdominal pain, vomiting, and jaundice (skin and eyes turn yellow). Some people with hepatitis B and most with hepatitis C experience mild or no symptoms. New HIV infection may cause fever, swollen lymph nodes, and a flu-like illness.

Sometimes people may not experience symptoms until much later. Even with no symptoms, infected people can still spread these disease to others from blood and body fluids through sex, sharing razors and toothbrushes, sharing needles, and from mother to infant.

6. How many people are potentially affected?

We don't know the exact number of patients who may have been potentially affected because there is no available list of patients. Several attempts were made to obtain the patient list from the dentist so that patients could be individually notified, but both the Dental Quality Assurance Commission and Public Health were unable to make contact with the dentist after the clinic was closed. The investigation done by the Washington State Department of Health – Dental Quality Assurance Commission (DQAC) could not determine the duration of the infection control problems but there was evidence that they could have been going on for a long time, possibly years.

7. When did Public Health learn about this? Why didn't they notify patients sooner?

Public Health – Seattle & King County learned about the suspension of the dentist license and DQAC investigation on October 1, 2018. Over a period of weeks, Public Health worked with Washington State Healthcare Associated Infection program and the DQAC investigator to determine risk to dental patients. Several attempts were made to obtain the patient list from the dentist so that patients could be individually notified, but both the Dental Quality Assurance Commission and Public Health were unable to make contact with the dentist after the clinic was closed. Public Health tried to find other avenues for locating patients so that they could each be notified, but this information was not available, leaving a news releases as the only notification option.

8. I received care at George M Davis Dental Clinic. What do I do next?

Share this information with your healthcare provider and talk about whether you should get tested for hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and HIV. Some things that could increase the risk of infection include multiple visits to this clinic, having a procedure like an extraction, or having medication that was injected by needle.

If you do get tested, healthcare providers should test for all 3 viruses: - hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV.

9. Some people may not have a primary care provider or health insurance. What do they do?

People without a healthcare provider can call 206-296-4949 for help setting up an appointment for testing.

10. What will happen if people get a blood test for HIV, hepatitis B or hepatitis C and find out they are positive?

Healthcare providers should explain the results of the tests to their patients and discuss if any further testing, evaluation or treatment is needed. Public Health will also provide an explanation of the test results and counseling to anyone who tests positive.

It is important to know that a positive test can mean that you have been exposed to one of the three viruses and, depending on the result, may be infected currently. It can't determine where or precisely when the exposure occurred.

11. Do you expect to find people who are positive for one of the three blood borne infections?

Yes, because these viruses are relatively common in the community it is very possible that there will be patients from this clinic identified with one of these three infections. That does not prove the infection is related to the clinic, however. Some individuals may already have had an infection that they may or may not have known about previously.

The overall prevalence of these infections in the population are:

HIV: About 3 or 4 people per 1000 King County residents have been diagnosed with HIV. Experts estimate that about 13% of King County residents who have HIV are unaware of their infection.

Hepatitis B: About 3 in 100 King County residents have hepatitis B

Hepatitis C: Overall 1 in 100 people in the US population is estimated to have hepatitis C and the risk is three times higher among "baby boomers" (persons born 1945-1965). It is estimated that about half of persons with HCV infection are not aware they are infected.

12. What happened to the dentist? Where can I get more information about the investigation?

The dentist's license was revoked and the clinic closed. The Washington State Department of Health investigation [report is available online](#) or copies can be requested by calling 360-236-4700.