

Managing Professional Risks

ADA Guidelines for Practice Success™ (GPS™)

ADA Tip Sheet on Managing Patients' Medical Emergencies

A recent survey by the American Dental Association's (ADA) Council on Dental Practice (CDP), revealed that the most commonly occurring medical emergencies requiring medical treatment that occur in dental practices are:

- syncope
- epinephrine reaction
- postural hypotension
- mild or moderate allergic reaction
- physical injury requiring First Aid
- hyperventilation
- seizures

While only a small percentage of dental patients experience a medical emergency while at the dental office, it's important for you and your team to be ready to respond in the event that an untoward event does occur. Following these tips can help protect your patients, and your practice, in the unlikely event that a patient does experience a medical emergency in the practice. Your professional liability carrier may also have resources to help ensure that your practice is complying with best practices.

It's a good idea for every dental practice to have a plan that can guide staff responses to medical emergencies in the dental practice. The tips below can help you develop, or update, your practice's patient medical emergency response plan.

- Identify which staff members are certified in Basic Life Support (BLS) as offered by the American Heart Association or the American Red Cross and which are certified in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).
 - ✓ Confirm that all certifications are current.
 - Develop a schedule to assure that all certified personnel receive the training needed to retain their certifications.
- Regularly offer all personnel updated training on responding to medical emergencies.
 - ✓ Common training methods include:
 - reviewing written materials
 - having live training by an outside presenter
 - conducting in-house training exercises
 - using drills or simulated events
 - participating in online training
 - ✓ Maintain a log or record that documents the medical emergency response training that staff received. The log should detail:
 - the date the training occurred
 - which staff members participated in the training
 - the method or type of training, including the name and any credentials of individuals conducting live training sessions
 - the results of any assessments performed as part of the training
- Maintain a current inventory of any ancillary items that might be used in the event of a medical emergency. Some examples include:
 - ✓ oxygen
 - ✓ an Automated External Defibrillator (AED)

- Determine whether your patient population warrants having pediatric pads for the AED
- Make sure staff are trained to use an AED
- ✓ an emergency first aid medical kit, with or without drugs
 - If your medical kit contains medications, such as epinephrine auto-injectors, it's a good idea to have a system set up to ensure that medications are not expired and to have a schedule for replacing any medications before they expire.
 - The ADA Member Advantage program has endorsed [HealthFirst](#) as its exclusive endorsed provider of dental emergency medical kits for ADA members.

Resource:

- [HealthFirst](#), the ADA Member Advantage program's exclusive endorsed provider of dental emergency medical kits

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