

Cathedral Dental Practice

Cold sore policy

The cold sore virus is very common and is carried by up to 80% of the population. It is caused by a virus called herpes simplex (HSV). Cold sores are **highly** infectious and capable of spreading to other parts of the body. Once you have been infected, the virus lies dormant in the nerves that supply feeling to the face and mouth. The virus can subsequently be reactivated, and it is the reactivation that presents as cold sores on the lips. At our practice **we will not treat anyone who has a cold sore present** in stages 1-3 as this is when the virus is highly contagious- unless you have a dental emergency which cannot wait. Once a hard scab has formed and isn't in a prominent place on the lips then we can see you for treatment.

Advice for patients with a cold sore

- Try not to break the blisters or pick the scabs.
- Always wash hands after touching the cold sore or applying medication.
- Avoid kissing.
- Do not touch the eyes and take extra care when applying/removing make up.
- Do not wet contact lenses with saliva while suffering with a cold sore.
- Sharing eating or drinking utensils such as cutlery and cups, should be avoided especially with children.
- Do not share personal hygiene items such as toothbrushes, face cloths or towels.
- **Make sure the cold sore is healed before visiting the dentist.**
Do consult a doctor if a cold sore becomes severe or extensive.
- Once infected, the virus cannot be removed. There are medicines available to treat the first episode of infection and to treat recurring cold sores. Here are a few key points to remember when treating cold sores:
- Treat the cold sore as soon as it starts developing (the tingle stage) as this can reduce the duration of the cold sore by up to 50%.
- It is never too late to start treating a cold sore as even during the blister stage, antiviral creams are effective. Treatment with an antiviral cream will also help prevent the spread of a virus.

An untreated cold sore will usually last between nine and eleven days.

If you have a cold sore and are due to visit your dental team, check with them first. Dentists prefer not to treat patients with active cold sores as the affected area may be painful, and may crack and bleed during dental treatment. The reception team will be able to rearrange your appointment this will usually be 2 weeks after the scab has formed.