



Virtual Visits for Orthodontists

A suggested workflow by Kyle Fagala, DDS, MDS

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has led to unprecedented mandated office closures, it's still as important as ever to stay connected to our patients. As orthodontists, technology allows us to make several purposeful changes in how we connect with those under our care. This includes phone, email, and text communications. In addition, virtual visits can reach patients in a unique way that increases their confidence and compliance. These "visits" also provide a sense of normalcy and connection for patients who are stuck at home.

1. Have your team divide the schedule, ideally working 2 to 3 days in advance.
2. Retainer checks are the easiest to complete virtually, but there isn't much benefit to virtual visits for bondings and debonds. You can still have patients submit photos to check-in if you would like.
3. For adjustments, you can call, text, or email the patient.
4. Explain the concept of virtual visits and make sure the patient is feeling positive about their treatment. If they are experiencing any acute pain or swelling, schedule an emergency visit.
5. Be prepared for common questions about prolonged treatment or current payment plans. Having a script on hand can make this easier.
6. Reschedule the patient for a typical interval (6 to 10 weeks). This will help avoid a major backlog of patients when office recommendations return to normal. It will also eliminate the need to reschedule hundreds of adjustment recalls! If a patient needs to be seen more urgently, place them on recall.
7. Text or email a PDF or video on how to take five key intraoral photos (Center, Right, Left, Upper, Lower). You can also have patients take facial photos if desired.
8. Once you receive photos, have an assistant place the records in the patient's chart. From here preliminary notes and next visit notes can be made or suggested.
9. The assistant can then alert the doctor in a Virtual Visits channel on Slack or via email or text.
10. The doctor would then review the records and notes, make suggestions, and finalize next visit notes.
11. The assistant will follow up with patients via phone, text, or email when necessary. At least one team member should take home enough elastics, oral hygiene products, and orthodontic wax to be able to mail to patients as needed.

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