

## Clearance, settle times and air changes

### Air Clearance Times

This is the time for the contaminated air to be replaced with fresh air in the surgery.

The time this will take depends on the number of air changes in your surgery.

<https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/guidelines/environmental/appendix/air.html#tableb1>

### Settle times

Infectious droplets will be produced during aerosol generating and non-aerosol generating procedures. These droplets can be highly infectious and can take 8-17 minutes to settle. If a dental visit is unlikely to have generated droplets then settle time may not be necessary. Once a procedure has finished, please ask the patient to replace their facemask and then start the timer.). Cleaning can be started at distant points in the room before the settle time is complete, but dental teams should try not to create too much disturbance/ movement in the room (to allow the droplets to settle). Dental teams should be aware of potential contamination of these areas from aerosol settle. The greatest contamination will be within 1m of the patient, so this area should be cleaned last after the settle time is complete.

At present, where the air clearance time is unknown, a one-hour timeframe should be used for aerosol generating procedures (this is based on Public Health England Infection control guidance).

The timer for this hour can commence at the point where aerosol generation stops (i.e. handpiece is put down). The timer should be started again from the beginning if there is further aerosol generation. At the end of treatment, the patient should put their mask back on and the timer for settle should start.

### Examples:

For non-AGP

Non-AGP settle time of 15 minutes begins as soon as the patient places on their facemask after their dental procedure has finished.

For example

- The clinician can write up patient records and surgery can be cleaned in that 15 minutes apart from the 1 m radius where the patient was sitting. This area can be cleaned at the end of the 15 minutes settle time.

For AGP

AGP settle time can begin as soon as the handpiece/3in 1/ultrasonic is last used. Non AGP dental care can continue to be carried out in that settle time.

For example,

- A room with one-hour settle time, if the handpiece was last used at 2pm and non AGP is provided for a further 20 minutes and the facemask placed on the patient after the end of dental treatment/care then the settle time will be 40 minutes.

#### Additional notes

- If the surgery is planning to have an air exchange system fitted i.e. air extraction unit, the manufacturer's information can be used to verify the number of air exchanges per hour depending on the size of the practice room.
- If the surgery already has an air extraction unit then evidence of the number of air exchanges per hour should be available. If the number of air exchanges per hour for the surgery cannot be verified then contact an occupational hygienist/ commissioning consultant who may be able to advise on this issue.

Where the number of air exchanges in a room are being used as the basis of air clearance, information and calculations should be made available on request by Health Boards/ HIW.

- If the practice is unable to obtain verification of the number of air exchanges per hour from an air extraction unit then the one-hour fallow time for AGP should be followed.
- If the surgery has windows that can be opened only then 1 hour fallow time for AGP should be followed.
- If a surgery does not have any windows or ventilation then it should not be used for AGP procedures at the moment.