

HONOR EARTH DAY ON APRIL 22

When the first Earth Day was held on April 22, 1970, millions of people went outdoors to protest the effects on the planet of 150 years of industry. This annual event is now celebrated for an entire year in 193 countries and focuses on a theme, such as reducing plastics use. Millions of citizens have organized political action on global, national, and local scales, resulting in progress at individual, community, corporate, and federal levels.

The dental profession has contributed to the movement – from making dental practices and patient visits safer to going paperless, transitioning to digital imaging, using recyclable and reusable materials, and employing amalgam separators and water-filtration systems. In fact, using more eco-friendly products and procedures also has increased practice efficiency. Systems like **RevenueWell**, a suite of communication and digital tools that streamline a number of practice management processes, save on paper and postage costs and reduce the amount of paper used, making a significant environmental impact.

The dental profession can play an important role in controlling the environmental impact of the practice of dentistry, and individual practices can contribute on a grassroots level.

Going Green

Thanks to many innovative companies, dental practices can choose to use “green” protocols and products that reduce the amount of materials they must purchase and what they pay for disposal. According to the Eco Dentistry Organization, most dental office waste can be traced to four processes: infection control, placing and removing mercury-containing materials, conventional X-rays, and water waste.



MERCURY COLLECTION DEVICES

While most dental practices are already in compliance, on July 4, 2020, all U.S. dental offices must use amalgam separators, such as the **Solmetex NXT Hg5** (Solmetex), to prevent amalgam from entering public water systems. This ISO 1143-certified system meets or exceeds all state and federal requirements. Amalgam separators are used in conjunction with a recycling vehicle, such as the **Syclone Replacement Canister and Recycle Kit** (Crosstex International), to safely remove collected amalgam, mercury, and tooth particles for recycling. Integral to the efficiency of this system is the dental vacuum. Midmark's **PowerVac G Dry Vac** is water-free and has an intuitive energy management system. To keep these systems running efficiently, they must be kept clean. The all-natural, pH-neutral **Patterson MicroBVac Evacuation System Cleaner** enhances and maintains vacuum performance.

DIGITAL DENTISTRY

Many patients are aware of the advantages of digital imaging: less radiation exposure, no darkrooms or processing chemicals, and easily viewed and stored images. They also may appreciate knowing that CAD/CAM systems, such as Dentsply Sirona's **CEREC Primescan**, are eco-friendlier than physical impressions and plastics. Sharing data with labs via email or in the cloud rather than putting it on a truck also helps lower emissions and conserve fossil fuels.

GREEN PRODUCTS EVERYONE WILL LOVE

EcoBee's **BeeSure** family of products includes a line of saliva ejectors made with 30% recycled plastic, another made with 100% preconsumer plastic waste, and a variety of dye-, chemical-, latex-, and fiberglass-free face masks (partial proceeds of which go to The Nature Conservancy).

Denticator Eco Disposable Prophy Angles (Young Dental Manufacturing) are made with 25% less plastic than leading disposable prophy angles and come in recyclable wrappers; 125-count boxes are made with 100% biodegradable recycled fiber. Patients will find the lighter-weight **Patterson Lead-Free Protective Apron** both comfortable and comforting.

To raise awareness of your eco-friendly practice, distribute gift bags containing **Burt's Bees Enamel Care Fluoride Toothpaste**, an all-natural toothpaste in 100% recyclable tubes and cartons. Toss in some **WooBamboo!** biodegradable bamboo toothbrushes and natural



biodegradable-silk, wax-coated dental floss, both packaged in renewable plant-based materials.

Make a Commitment to the Future

Small steps and minor changes in dental offices can have a big impact on the environment. Everyone can be proud of reducing consumption and waste and using eco-friendly products that have less impact on the earth and also are beneficial to practices and patients.

Individual dental practices contribute 4,680 paper and plastic autoclave bags to landfills a year. A single-dentist practice could eliminate more than 40,000 pieces of paper and more than 20,000 pieces of plastic from landfills each year just by switching to reusable patient bibs.

Sources:

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