



How to Choose a Laundry  
Solution for Your Dental  
Practice in the  
**Post-COVID World**

**CROWN**



## How to Choose a Laundry Solution for Your Dental Practice in the Post-COVID World

With patient care at the center of everything you do, cleanliness and a professional image have always been important to dental practices. However, as we now operate in a “new normal” following the COVID-19 pandemic, your patient’s expectations, along with those of your staff, have been forever shifted.

A heightened sensitivity to safety, sanitation, and disinfection has forced dental practices to re-evaluate how they meet these new standards. From cleaning procedures to patient interactions, it is necessary to look at every area of your practice through a new lens.

High up on the list of items to evaluate?  
Your practice’s laundry solution.

Now more than ever, it is critical that your practice keep uniforms clean and safe for both patients and staff alike. There are many ways to launder your apparel, each with its own risks and benefits. Let’s explore how to choose the solution that is right for your practice.

# STEP 1

## Assess your apparel use and how it has changed.

Your practice's size, specialties, and patient load influence your apparel needs. Before you begin exploring laundry solutions, it is important to know exactly what those needs are. Take inventory of the number of garments your team is going through on a weekly basis:

	Number of Staff	Number Per Staff / Week	Total Required
Scrubs			
Lab Coats			
Warm-Up Jackets			
Barrier Lab Coats			
Isolation Gowns			
Fluid Resistant Disposable Gowns			

If you are like most dental practices, these numbers have changed significantly in the last 6 months. In order to maintain the utmost cleanliness, sanitation, and safety, staff is likely changing more often throughout the week.

Gone are the days of only changing uniforms on a set schedule. In the past, patients were not as concerned seeing a small stain spill on a scrub top; today, this raises a red flag. Where your dentists may have used 1-2 lab coats per week before, they are likely changing daily now. This requires either more frequent laundering or more garments be made available to each person.

Look critically at how often you and your team are wearing and laundering your apparel. You are changing your processes and procedures in order to provide the best care and maintain your reputation as a practice, but it is also important to understand the effort it is taking to manage these changes as well.

Your laundry solution should be flexible enough to allow for uniform changes throughout the week, as well as support the increased wear and tear you are beginning to see due to more frequent laundering.



## STEP 2

### Identify your staff's needs and patient expectations.

Due to new regulatory pressures and the heightened sensitivity over cleanliness and safety, the needs and expectations of your staff and patients have changed.

#### Staff

In order to do their best work, your staff needs to be able to trust their work environment. The apparel they wear is one of the leading factors that determines how secure they feel. Consider how their needs have changed recently. Team members may:

- Be wary of re-wearing garments they previously would have, such as lab coats or warm-ups
- No longer feel secure in short sleeved or limited coverage garments
- Not feel comfortable bringing home garments that have patient fluids on them

#### Patients

Just as your staff needs have changed, so too have the expectations and needs of your patients. As many people are still evaluating the safety of routine visits to doctors and dentists, it is imperative that they have every confidence in your practice when they decide to return, knowing that they are not putting their health at risk by seeing you.

The way your staff is presenting themselves can foster this trust and security. Your apparel and laundering practices must:

- Display cleanliness and professionalism
- Be proactively communicated as another measure to keep patients safe
- Help to put patients at ease

## STEP 3

### Understand your laundry solution options.

Dental practices like yours have many options when it comes to laundering your apparel. As you evaluate the one that is best for your practice, begin by deciding what is most important to you. Cleanliness goes without saying, but consider the other factors that contribute to making the solution a success:

**TIME:** Hours required of staff during and outside of work

**CONVENIENCE:** Oversight required by practice management

**APPEARANCE:** Consistency in apparel presentation and finishing

**RELIABILITY:** Sustainability and repeatability of solution over time

**RISK:** Professionalism, cleanliness, or security concerns

#### Take-Home

With this solution, individual staff members are responsible to launder their garments at home between shifts. While this option requires little effort for practice management, it also asks staff to bring home potentially dangerous textiles that may or may not be correctly cleaned using residential cleaning solutions. Practices also run the risk of inconsistent staff appearance -- something that, as discussed, is more important than ever. It is unlikely that every person is going to show up to work each day with their uniforms cleaned, pressed, and ironed, ultimately allowing patient perception to ride on the practices of individual staff members.



Cleanliness	Time	Convenience	Appearance	Reliability	Risk
Not Guaranteed	High	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High

### On-Premise Laundering

Practices choosing on-premise laundering purchase and install washers and dryers in their facilities. Staff often share the responsibility of laundering and finishing the garments during the workday, ensuring there are clean garments available for upcoming shifts.

Wearing and laundering garments on-site is very convenient for many practices. However, many find the increased water bill and time required of staff can make this a less sustainable option, especially with volume increasing as staff members are now changing apparel more frequently. Similar to the Take-Home option, there is also the uncertainty that water temperature and cleaning solutions may not successfully remove viruses and other harmful substances.



Cleanliness	Time	Convenience	Appearance	Reliability	Risk
Not Guaranteed	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate

### National Industrial Uniform Service Provider

Another option available to dental practices is working with an industrial uniform service provider. With this solution, your practice leases or rents apparel for your team. A driver retrieves soiled garments and replaces them with clean ones, often on a weekly or biweekly basis. This takes the laundry responsibilities off of practice management and staff, allowing them to focus on their patients.

While this solution may be convenient, the laundering processes of these industrial uniform providers may not be suitable for practices that are prioritizing clean and sanitized garments. Their processes mean that it is likely that a dentist’s lab coat or hygienist’s scrub top is being washed in the same load as the apron from a local food processor or shop towels from an auto body shop. These providers are not required to prove that viruses or other harmful materials are removed. Many practices have also reported frustration with the service level of these very large companies, sometimes leaving staff to scramble (and rewear) garments when deliveries do not arrive as expected.



Cleanliness	Time	Convenience	Appearance	Reliability	Risk
Not Guaranteed	Low	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate

## Healthcare-Certified Uniform Service Provider

This solution is offered in a similar format to national industrial uniform service providers: garments are leased or rented and picked up, laundered, and dropped off on a set schedule. There is no up-front cost to you to purchase these garments; rather, weekly costs are just associated with renting and laundering them. Practice management can enjoy the convenience of not having to worry about laundering garments and have the ability to change quantities and products as needs fluctuate and wear increases.

Healthcare-certified uniform service providers are overseen by various organizations that require their handling, cleaning, and finishing processes be held to strict quality standards. These certifications and standards are upheld by OSHA, the CDC, and the CMS and require that textiles be tested for zero presence of infectious material. Practice managers enjoy the peace of mind knowing their staff is not just presenting themselves professionally but doing so in apparel that is truly clean.



Cleanliness	Time	Convenience	Appearance	Reliability	Risk
Guaranteed	Low	High	High	High	Low



**Tip:** Ask providers you're considering if they provide specialized training to their staff for healthcare practices: if employees are security cleared, trained in HIPAA regulations, and familiar with practice operations. This adds another layer of peace of mind knowing patients are receiving the best care.



## STEP 4

Choose the solution you are confident will keep your staff healthy, patients safe, and doors open.

Now, reflect on your decision criteria. Using what you learned about your staff needs and patient expectations in Step 2 and contributing factors in Step 3, what is critical for your laundry solution in order to deliver on that?

### **Cleanliness**

How important is the removal of harmful materials from your garments?

### **Reliability**

How sustainable is this over the long-term?

### **Convenience**

How much oversight is required by practice management?

### **Risk**

Are we presenting any health, security, or reputation risks to our patients or staff?

### **Time**

Is the time required by staff taking away from their ability to serve patients well?

How much time is spent on ordering for new hires, handling repairs, and other management tasks?

### **Appearance**

Is our staff guaranteed to be presenting themselves consistently and professionally?

As you narrow down the options that are best for your practice, it is important to research each one. Here are two important areas to consider in your research:

### **Cleaning process**

- Are linens, uniforms, and apparel washed in high temp or low temp formulas?
- Is the cleaning solution proven to remove bioburden, including viruses and bacteria?
- If considering a uniform service provider: Is the plant HLAC accredited? TRSA Hygienically Clean?
- If considering a uniform service provider: Does the plant follow OSHA's bloodborne pathogen standards (CFR 1910.1030)?

### **Time management and reliability**

- What is the cost per hour to have a staff member facilitate this solution?
- How reliable has our current solution been in the past?
- If considering a uniform service provider: What is the on-time delivery percentage?
- If considering a uniform service provider: How will deliveries be made in our facility without disrupting operations?

If you are considering a uniform service provider, ask for a tour of the plant. It is important to understand how and where your apparel is being laundered and the processes in place to ensure your garments are as clean as possible. Be sure to request case studies of their experience working with other dental practices as well: your work is unique, and a good provider should understand that!





You are now armed with an understanding of how your apparel needs have changed, the needs and expectations of your staff and patients, and the options available to practices like yours, and the criteria to consider in your laundry solution.

Now it is time to choose the one that is right for your business. You have worked hard to build the reputation of your practice up until now, and while this “new normal” has brought about many changes, choosing the right solution can help you focus on what you do best:

**provide exceptional patient care.**

Your practice and your  
patients deserve the very best.  
Crown helps you deliver it.

Crown is a New England healthcare-certified uniform service provider and the only Massachusetts laundry certified by HLAC (Healthcare Laundry Accreditation Council). Every item is handled by OSHA-trained employees, processed to the strictest health standards, and then finished professionally.

So your practice isn't just meeting a standard — it's raising the bar.

Just what the doctor ordered.<sup>TM</sup>

Call us today for your free dental apparel assessment. We can help you operate in confidence.

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