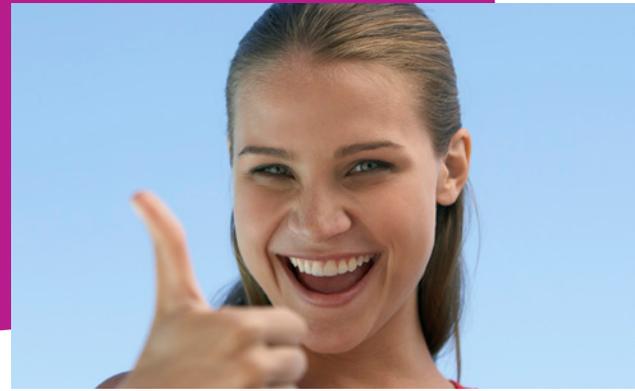


Overcoming dental anxiety

TAKING FEAR out of dental visits



To many, a visit to the dentist can be a frightening experience. In fact, up to 40 million Americans don't go to the dentist as often as they should because of fear and anxiety.¹ However, if you delay a visit, you can end up spending more time in the dental chair if problems that could have been prevented earlier reach a stage where treatment is the only option.¹

But there is good news — you and your dentist have the tools to make each visit a comfortable experience.

What your dentist does to make each visit more positive

- Tries to put you at ease, possibly offering you or your child a tour of the office and explaining the equipment. The dentist may also allow an adult remain with a child under three throughout the visit.
- Provides a clean, comfortable waiting room with magazines and oral health resources, perhaps with music or television, or a play area for children.
- Trains front office staff to answer questions and help you understand what to expect during your visit.
- Uses the latest procedures to help eliminate or minimize discomfort. Offers pain control medications and local anesthesia, as procedures and patient history suggest.*
- Keeps you informed and in control throughout the visit.

What you can do to make yourself more comfortable¹

- Ask your dentist questions about your oral health, your treatment and your concerns. Discuss any specific fears openly with your dentist.
- Throughout the procedure, focus on breathing slowly and regularly; decreased oxygen levels can further increase feelings of panic.

- Use hand signals any time you're uncomfortable during a procedure.
- Avoid caffeine and sugary foods that can make you anxious before your visit. Choose high protein foods instead, as they help produce a calming effect.
- Maintain a schedule of regular preventive visits so the dentist can detect oral health problems early before significant treatment becomes necessary.

Common dental “fear factors”

Comments from family and friends or memories about a bad dental experience more than 10 years in the past are the top sources of anxiety.² Other fear factors can include:¹

- Feeling like the dentist is rushed or is neglecting your concerns
- Anxiety about the effectiveness of local anesthetic
- Anticipation of pain
- Costs of recommended procedures
- Sterile smell of the dentist's office
- Interrupting the normal day's routine
- For children, the first visit is a journey into the unknown

* Please refer to your plan documents for information on covered procedures.

1. Academy of General Dentistry (www.agd.org)

2. www.perio.org – Online poll of periodontists

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