

How to CONQUER YOUR FEAR of the dentist



Everyone wants a healthy and beautiful smile. But fear and anxiety about visiting the dentist can prevent people from accomplishing this goal.

About 9–15% of all Americans avoid the dentist because of dental anxiety and fear. This means 30–40 million Americans are so afraid of dental treatment that they avoid it altogether.¹ In fact, of those individuals with dental insurance who hadn't visited the dentist, 32% said that fear of the dentist was their reason for not going.²

If you have a fear of the dentist, don't give up hope. No matter how challenging your fears may be, there are resources available to help you.



32%
fear dentist
and don't go

What causes dental fears?

Avoidance of the dentist can stem from dental anxiety and fear. Both of these are reactions to unknown danger. It's also possible you might not even know what causes these strong feelings. Some common reasons people are afraid of going to the dentist include:³

- Embarrassment
- Pain
- Loss of control (the fact that you can't get up and leave in the middle of the treatment or the inability to totally communicate while you're being treated)
- Fear of medical settings or the dental office
- Fear of needles
- Cost of treatment
- Choking or gagging
- Unpleasant sights, smells sounds, and tastes
- Previous unpleasant experience with a dentist
- Post traumatic experiences such as physical, emotional and sexual abuse

However personal and meaningful your fear(s) may be, you should realize that your dentist is trained and familiar with these fears, and able to help you face them.

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Why is it important to overcome my dental fear?

Getting regular checkups, cleanings, and x-rays is critical to your overall health. Research has shown an association between good oral health and medical conditions including pregnancy, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, obesity and several other conditions. Poor oral health can also affect other more common problems such as bad breath, poor speech and digestion.

Regular dental checkups are just as important as going to your annual medical checkup and will also save you time and money in the long run. In fact, every dollar spent on preventive dental care could save \$8 to \$50 in restorative and emergency treatments⁴ – and potentially more in additional types of medical treatment. And, most dental plans cover preventive procedures at low or no cost to you.

What are some ways to deal with fear of the dentist?

- Talk to your dentist about your fears in advance of treatment – communication about fear is key.⁵
- Relaxation and hypnosis – often listening to calming music can help.⁶
- Talk to a licensed mental health professional about your fears. Many employers offer an employee assistance program staffed with mental health professionals that can help you deal with your fear.

- Meet with your dentist for a consultation before starting any treatment. Write down your feelings and questions and share them with your dentist. This will make you more comfortable with the dental office setting and the process.¹
- If you're concerned about the cost of your treatment, ask your dentist about a payment plan. Though most procedures are covered at reasonable charges, many dentists will work with patients whose financial issues prevent them from getting necessary dental care.
- Advances in techniques and technology have made dentistry much more pleasant than it was decades ago.⁵ New equipment and treatment methods make procedures that were once considered uncomfortable go more quickly and pleasantly than you may have experienced in the past.

If you're afraid of going to the dentist, you're not alone. Overcoming your fears with the techniques described above can leave you feeling more in control of your own health.



So go ahead and get that beautiful, healthy, white smile.

1 – Michael Krochak, DMD. 2008. *What is Dental Phobia? Prevalence and Causes*. Retrieved December 28, 2009 from www.dentalfear.net.

2 – National Association of Dental Plans. *2007 Consumer Survey*, Pg. 27. 19th Annual Conference. September 2007.

3 – Michael Krochak, DMD. 2008. *What is Dental Phobia? Why do I fear the dentist?* Retrieved December 28, 2009 from www.dentalfear.net.

4 – www.adha.org (American Dental Hygienist Association).

5 – Fran Worrall. *Overcome Your Fear of the Dentist*. Retrieved December 28, 2009 from www.yourfamilyhealth.com.

6 – Carl Walker. *How to Cure Dentist Phobia - Stop Your Fear of Dentists*. Retrieved December 28, 2009 from www.ezinearticles.com.



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