



Choosing a Dental Office

To lessen some of the anxiety people often experience with oral health care visits, it is important to select a dental office where you feel comfortable. Choose a dental office that has a registered dental hygienist on staff. Dental hygienists are highly educated and licensed specialists whose job is to prevent periodontal disease and tooth decay.

Look for a dental office that is “prevention-oriented.” Your oral health professional should allow time for you to ask questions about ways to improve your oral health—from more effective brushing and flossing techniques to selecting oral health care products.

After finding the right office for you, be sure to work with your dental hygienist to get the most out of your visits. Ask questions about ways to improve your oral health—from more effective brushing and flossing techniques to selecting oral health care products that meet your specific needs.

Your complete medical and oral health history—including thorough head and neck examinations—should be a part of your initial visit to a dental office. You should be told about the exam results and recommended treatment (if any) as well as costs before treatment is started.

Infection Control in the Dental Office

While experts agree that the chance of transmitting infectious diseases during routine visits to a dental office is remote, be sure that your dental office personnel follow the universal CDC and OSHA safety standards:

- Use protective clothing, including gloves, masks, gowns or laboratory coats, and protective eyewear for all treatment procedures.
- Change gloves after each patient contact.
- Wash hands thoroughly before and after treating each patient.
- Heat sterilizes all nondisposable instruments and disinfects surfaces and equipment after treatment of each patient.
- Discard disposable needles, syringes, and other sharp instruments in puncture-resistant containers.
- Place all potentially infectious waste in closable, leak-proof containers or bags that are color-coded, labeled, or tagged in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local regulations.

Many offices do post a list of the infection control procedures they follow in a reception area or elsewhere. If you don't see this information, ask about it.