

Why People Avoid the Dentist

The top three reasons people don't go to the dentist and why we shouldn't succumb to them.

by Charles Greenebaum, DDS
Community Contributor

My father was also my dentist. Having dental treatment was never an issue. It was easy to trust that my dad wouldn't hurt me. I learned from an early age the importance of taking care of my teeth and my dental care was all free. My experience of going to the dentist was a much different one. I admit I was lucky. I also realize the strong relationships I have developed with my patients over the last 30 years.

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They may not feel like they are going to their dad, but most of them would say it's as close as it gets.

The fact remains that a relationship needs a beginning. If people avoid the dentist, a relationship can never develop. There are many reasons people avoid seeing the dentist. Here are some of them:

Time

It used to be that dentists kept bankers' hours. Not anymore. Even bankers don't just have bankers' hours these days. Many dentists have made their hours very convenient for patients. Their offices open early, close late and are open Saturdays. In addition, dentists will schedule longer appointments, performing more treatment at one sitting and reducing the number of visits.

Money

There is no arguing that investing in one's teeth can be costly. This is often because the person avoided seeing the dentist in the first place. Your teeth, just like a car, need regular maintenance; otherwise avoidable problems will likely occur. If you have good dental health, then a minimal investment in regular maintenance is all you need. If, however, your dental health is compromised, then a significant invest-

ment may be necessary initially. Ignore the problem or put off treatment and the situation will most likely worsen. It will then become more complicated (expensive) or even impossible to fix. Remember, ignore your teeth and they will go away.

Many people are afraid to go to the dentist because they assume they just "can't afford it." Maybe, maybe not. Visit a dentist; discuss what's going on in your mouth and the alternatives in treatment. Then you can decide together on what plan is best for you under your circumstances. Most treatment can be spread out over time making it more affordable. You may have to put off the big screen television until next year, but you will be able to enjoy chewing all of the good foods that are advertised.

Many people have dental insurance. If you do, the dentist and office staff will work with you so that you can maximize your benefits. Most dentists have various financing options to help in paying for treatment. Some even have in-office savings plans for people without dental insurance.

Fear

Television, movies and other media have, over the years, depicted dental treatment as a painful and unpleasant experience. Too many people still believe this to be a fact. If you say, "root canal" to someone, he or she would most likely wince and imagine the terrible pain. I could tell you it's not true, but if you are fearful of the dentist, I could say it until I'm blue in the face and you would not believe me.

Dentistry is not like the three stooges anymore with a pair of pliers and a hammer. Shots are virtually painless. One can wear headphones to hide the noises. It's common to have televisions in the treatment rooms. Sedation is available. By far the most important thing is to have a compassionate dentist and staff whose number one concern is making sure you're comfortable.

There are other reasons people avoid the dentist. Maybe "nothing is hurting." Perhaps they believe they will have dentures because their parents did. It could be they don't have a dentist they can trust. But remember, everyone eventually needs to see the dentist. Stop avoiding the dentist and make an appointment to save your teeth rather than waiting to remove them.



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