



Open Up and Ask Your Dentist Questions



When you're sitting in the dentist chair, it can be hard to get a word in between the cleaning procedures, but it's important for you to speak up. Asking questions about recommended procedures and your oral health is important for your well being and pocketbook. The more you know, the better choices you'll make so start by asking questions.

Your Rights

As a dental patient you have many rights, ranging from getting a second opinion to refusing treatment. In order to achieve better results, it is your responsibility to play an active role in managing your dental care along with your dentist. If you don't understand your dentist's advice, it is important for you to get clarification. As a dental patient your basic rights include:

- Having your dental records kept private
- Getting details about procedures' risks
- Finding out the cost of treatment
- Receiving sufficient information regarding treatment alternatives
- Being informed of health problems
- Filing a grievance and receiving prompt review of your complaint

Your Dentist's Responsibility

Your dentist's job is to coordinate the dental services you receive, from preventive dental care such as exams and cleanings, to dental treatment such as repairing a broken tooth or removing decay and restoring the tooth with a filling.

Dentists are also responsible for assessing your unique needs, irrespective of your coverage, and informing you of all your options. An ongoing relationship with your dentist increases your chances of receiving the best care possible, taking into consideration all aspects of your health, life and environment.

Choosing a Dentist

Having a dentist whom you visit regularly and feel comfortable with is important to your overall oral health. The best way to select a dentist is to get recommendations from people you know or your previous dentist. During your first visit, you should be able to determine if this is the right dentist for you.

Consider the following when selecting a dentist:

- Is the office easy to get to from your home or job?
- Does the office appear to be clean, neat and orderly?
- Does the dentist explain techniques that will help you prevent dental health problems?
- How are after-hour emergencies handled?
- Is information provided about fees and payment plans before treatment is scheduled?
- Does the facility have the type of special needs access I may need to get into the facility?
- Does the practice have the ability to treat any special needs I may have?

Some Questions to Consider Asking

- Based on my oral health needs, how often should I get exams (e.g., every six months or yearly)?
- What are all my treatment options?
- Which treatment do you recommend and why does it fit my needs better than the other options you described?
- How much discomfort should I expect?
- Will my symptoms go away? When?
- What is the cost of the recommended treatment and the other options described? What will the cost of the recommended treatment or other options be to me?
- How many times have you done this procedure?
- What kind of follow-up care do I need?
- What could happen if I delay this treatment?

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