

Fear of Dental Visits: Best Methods to Alleviate Anxiety, Panic

Most people are a little apprehensive about a visit to the dentist, while others are just downright frightened.

People who don't see a dentist regularly admit that fear is the overriding issue. The fear can be so severe that some individuals will put up with gum infections, pain, or even broken and unsightly teeth, rather than make a dental appointment.



5 Ways to Help Alleviate Fear

- **Identify your causes of anxiety and phobia.** Pain is the major concern. Other concerns include loss of control, feeling of helplessness, embarrassment over condition of teeth and gums, and negative past experiences.
- **Communicate fears prior to appointment.** Before you set an appointment, be vocal about your apprehensions, fears and anxiety. This gives the dentist a way to gauge the situation and create an action plan suited for your needs. In most cases, dentists will devise cues and signals.
- **Use distractions.** This helps divert attention during treatment. Try listening to music, fiddling with a stress ball or counting to yourself. Prior to appointment, watch a funny video or a feel-good clip to help you relax.
- **Are sedatives helpful?** Sedation can help reduce anxiety and keep a patient calm and relaxed during treatment. Sedatives include nitrous oxide, and oral or IV sedation. Discuss with your dentist which one might work best for you.
- **Practice relaxation techniques.** Relaxation exercises can help someone stay calm during treatment. The tactics include breathing, which involves taking a deep breath and letting it out very slowly. This will help relax the muscles and slow down heart rate.