

## Dental Anxiety

Synonyms: Dental fear, afraid of the dentist, dental phobia, psychogenic dental issues

Meta Description: Millions of people avoid going to the dentist due to fear. Many improvements in dentistry have allowed people to return to the dentist and experience no pain with their dental procedures. Different medications can also help people to cope with their dental fears.

Headline: Don't be afraid to go to the dentist! Be afraid not to!

Article DEK: When people avoid the dentist due to fear, problems will get worse, more expensive and lead to much more extensive treatment. If people are willing to work with their dentists to overcome this fear, many options exist that can lead to a rewarding dental experience. Dentistry is a necessary part of our lives in order to prevent disease, and allow people to fix problems that have accumulated over the years.

Most of the time when people come to the dentist they say, " Nothing personal doc, but I hate the dentist!" I don't take this personally and realize what they are saying is that they have a fear, phobia and past dental baggage that was most unpleasant. My charge is to help people enjoy the process of dental care and to minimize any uncomfortable component to their care. While patients may have had fillings done in their youth with no dental anesthesia or poor experiences with extractions, these phobias have become ingrained in a person from early on.

In our office we use nitrous oxide as a mild sedative for people to help them relax. They get flavored topical anesthetics that are applied for 5 minutes to completely anesthetize the tissue before the injections are done to "numb" up the patient as well. The we use sun glasses to decrease visual stimulation, music headphones as a form of audio analgesia and we make sure the room is very comfortable. These types of visual and auditory analgesia all help to take the edge off.

When a dentist gives an injection they can wiggle the lip or use a machine to vibrate the tissue to further confuse the nerves so they feel wiggling and vibration and not pain.

The next way we can help people is through the use of anxiolytic agents or pills to relax people before and during their appointments. These agents will make people sleepy and can make a patient more relaxed so their dental work can be completed. Examples of medication that is used are Valium, Alprazolam, Ativan, Clonazepam, and sleeping agents like Halcion. Sonata and Ambien to name just a few.

For people that are willing to undergo psychiatric consultation, perhaps underlying dental phobias can be discussed and treated.

Lastly, there is intra-venous sedation where sedative hypnotics and muscle relaxants are used to fully sedate people for their dentistry. Most people are familiar with this as it is what is used when wisdom tooth extractions are performed for some people.

Discussing your fears openly with your dentist will allow them to help you establish the right path to treat your concerns and allow you to undergo necessary treatment.