



August

Dental Digest

August 2018 Volume 2, Issue 8

Time To Face Your Fears!

It's that time of year again! School is just around the corner! For some kids the first day of school is an exciting day, for some, summer ended way too soon, and for others, thinking of the first day of school is just plain scary! We all have something we are afraid of—spiders, the dark, heights, maybe even going to the dentist. Sometimes, you can avoid scary things. You do not like heights? Stay close to the ground. But seeing the dentist is one fear you should not dodge. Here are some things you can do to help you get to the dental office and through your next appointment:

Be Honest About Your Fears: Let the office know that you are anxious. Tell the receptionist when you book your appointment, and tell the staff members when you arrive. Even more importantly, tell your dentist! Let him know what makes you nervous or if you have had a bad experience in the past. It is especially important to let the dentist know if you have felt pain before. Sometimes patients experience unnecessary pain even though they have been given a local anesthetic. They often do not say anything for fear of upsetting the dentist or because they are embarrassed, but a larger dose of anesthetic at the beginning of treatment often works better than trying to give more once the treatment starts.

- Talk to the team about the coping skills that have worked for you in the past and those that you would like to try. Also, ask to start with simple appointments if possible.
- Do not be afraid to ask questions. Some people worry about what is going to happen before and during the procedure. If you are curious, ask the dentist what the treatment involves or to briefly explain as you go along. Also, don't be afraid to ask about your options! If needles and a drill aren't your thing, ask about our Solea laser and whether or not it can be used for your appointment! The Solea Laser provides a much quicker, quieter, more comfortable approach to dentistry and it is an option we now prefer and are happy to provide!
- Agree on a signal you can give—like raising your hand—if you need to take a break during treatment. We are happy to work with you and want you to have the best experience possible.

Distract Yourself: You have a lot of options for distracting yourself to help take your mind off the treatment.

- Bring headphones and some music or an audio book to listen to
- Occupy your hands by squeezing a soft stress ball or playing with a fidget toy
- Ask your dentist about other options that might help

Breathe: Deep breathing brings oxygen into your body, helping slow your heart rate and relax your muscles. You can practice deep breathing anywhere—on the way to the appointment, in the waiting room, or in the chair before treatment begins. There are number of different breathing exercises that may help. For example, you can try breathing in deeply while counting slowly to 5. Hold your breath for a second. Then, sigh or exhale slowly. Do this for 4 or 5 breaths. Deep breathing exercises can even be performed when you're not facing an appointment. That way, when you have an appointment scheduled, you'll be better prepared. (Note: If you have a medical condition, you may want to talk to your physician about whether these or other physical exercises are right for you or if they should be modified to give you better results.)

Get in tune with your body through relaxation: It may sound backward, but sometimes you can relax by tensing your muscles first. One way is to slowly move from one muscle group to the next before treatment begins, tensing the muscles in each group for 5 to 7 seconds then relaxing for 20 seconds. Four sample muscle groups are:

- feet, calves, thighs, and buttocks
- hands, forearms, and biceps
- chest, stomach, and lower back
- head, face, throat, and shoulders

This exercise also might be something you could practice before your appointment, so that when you need it, you will be ready to fully experience the benefits.

Bring someone with you: Bringing someone you trust, someone who isn't afraid of dentists, to sit with you during your exam might put you at ease. Plus, that person can speak for you in times when you can't, adding to your control of the situation.

These are just a few coping techniques. Work with your dental team to develop a plan that not only gets you in the door, but keeps you coming back for visits on a regular basis.

Remember that slow dental work is better than none: It may take you a period of weeks or months to complete the dental work you need. This is OK. Don't let this stop you from starting. Take as long as you need while you work toward overcoming your fear and getting treatment. Doing a little bit at a time in order to keep your fears at bay is better than doing nothing at all.

Take good care of your teeth: This is the best tip of all for overcoming dental anxiety. While you'd expect those with dental anxiety to work hard to protect their teeth in order to avoid going to the dentist, sometimes that's not the case. Brush well, eat right and floss daily, and it's likely that your next dental visit won't be nearly as scary.



Don't let your insurance benefits go to waste!

Use your dental benefits or flex benefits before they are gone at the end of the year!

**Call us to schedule an appointment.
701-254-4521**

