

NOTHING PERSONAL DOC, BUT I HATE DENTISTS!

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WHAT DENTIST HASN'T HEARD THOSE WORDS? Many patients may have the thought, even if they don't actually say the words. Since the dawn of modern time, dentistry has served as a ripe source of frightening imagery for artists. Despite dramatic changes in dentistry, those images persist in the minds of the public, causing some to

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delay seeing or completely avoiding the dentist.

Many people are unsure how to choose a dentist or how to make informed decisions regarding their oral health. How do you find Dr. Right? A number of sources exist. You can use the Yellow Pages, a referral service, newspaper or magazine ads, a web site, a referral from a friend or other doctor, or select a name from a dental plan list. Ultimately, it comes down to making sure you are in the right place. Do your homework and follow your instincts. When you call an office for the first time, you might ask for a "get acquainted visit" with the dentist. Can you tour the office and be introduced to the staff?

Your first visit should include a comprehensive examination unless your appointment was to address a specific or urgent concern. You shouldn't feel rushed and have plenty of time to discuss your questions, treatment options, and financial concerns.

The importance of communicating

your fears and any issues of embarrassment and trust is critical in making your dental experience a good one. The following checklist may help you express your concerns with your dentist:

- I gag easily.
- I feel out of control when I'm lying down in the dental chair.
- I have not been to the dentist in a long time, and I feel uncomfortable about what you will say about my teeth and my dental hygiene.
- Pain relief is a top priority for me.
- I don't like shots (or I've had a bad reaction to shots).
- Please tell me what I need to know about my mouth in order to make an informed decision.
- My teeth are very sensitive.
- I don't like the sound of that tool that makes the picking and scraping noise. It's like someone is scratching fingernails on a blackboard.
- I don't like cotton in my mouth.
- I hate the noise of the drill.
- Please respect my time. I don't want to be left sitting in the reception area.
- I want to know the cost up front. No money surprises please.
- I have difficulty listening and remembering what I hear while sitting in the dental chair.
- I have health problems and questions that we need to discuss.

Let's look at making a "Handle Me With Care" pact between you and your dental professionals. This simple statement will make a big difference in how you are treated and how you feel about going to the dentist:

I ask that you honestly inform me about my dental health. I want you to make me aware of the best quality dentistry available today. Then we can dis-



cuss how I can make healthy choices that will work within my budget. I also want to know all the pain relief options available to me in your dental office, how each dental procedure will work, and how much of my time will be required.

Taking charge of your dental health-care is your right. Making the right decisions for yourself doesn't have to be difficult or confusing. I trust the "Handle Me With Care" checklist and pact can help you in your effort to achieve a healthy and beautiful smile. This article was based on a consumer's guide to dentistry with the same name as the article (with permission). The book, *Nothing Personal Doc, But I Hate Dentists*, by Dr. Mac Lee, has been featured on the Discovery Channel and is available from Dr. Barr's office at no charge to patients. ♦

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