



# Dental Anxiety: Got the Jitters About Seeing the Dentist?

**If fear is keeping you from going to the dentist, you are not alone. Dental anxiety is a real issue for many Americans. There are several ways to overcome these fears and make your dental visit a manageable experience.**

## **A Few Common Reasons Why Some People Have the Jitters About Seeing the Dentist:**

- The worry about possible pain or the fear that the local anesthetic will not be effective
- The feeling that the dentist is rushed and not paying attention to your needs
- Sense of having no control, especially for those who have not established communication patterns with their dentist
- Memory of a previous unpleasant experience, such as a childhood memory
- Some are even bothered by the smell of a dental office

## **Tips to Reduce Your Anxiety and Take Control**

The key to reducing your anxiety is to arm yourself with information and find ways that make you feel that you are in control.

Prior to your dental appointment:

- Find a dentist that lets you feel in control.

- Get the facts about any procedure. What you imagine is usually far worse than reality.
- Be an active participant in your care. Ask your dentist about his or her policy concerning relaxation sedatives and advanced anesthetics — what may be used and how long it lasts.

## **During Your Dental Appointment**

- Work with your dental team so they understand your fears and can even develop hand signals to help communicate with you during the appointment.
- Schedule your visit when you are not rushed or under pressure, such as in the morning or on Saturday.
- If the sounds associated with dental treatment bother you, bring a portable audio player and headset so you can listen to your favorite music.
- Try to visualize a place that has pleasant memories that can help take your mind off matters at hand.
- Focus on breathing regularly and slowly while relaxing your entire body.
- Avoid coffee, tea and other caffeinated beverages prior to a dental visit.
- Avoid sugary foods in favor of the more calming effects of high-protein foods before your appointment.

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If you have an uneasy feeling about going to the dentist, find a dentist who puts you at ease and in control of your dental experience. There are many steps you can take so that you can get the oral health care necessary to maintain healthy teeth and gums. It is important to work through this fear, not only for your oral health, but for your overall health.

*Sources:*

*Academy of General Dentistry: [www.agd.org](http://www.agd.org);*

*American Dental Association: [www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org)*