

WHAT MIGHT HELP

Here are some things which might make it easier for you to visit a dentist. You can tick any that are important to you.

1. PEOPLE

It might help me if...

- I knew that the dentist would not make any negative remarks about my teeth or my oral hygiene, and would not be horrified by the state of my mouth
- it was a female / a male dentist
- the dentist was older / younger
- I knew that the dentist would not think it silly if I had a panic attack and/or started crying or shaking
- I knew that the dentist would not lecture me
- I could meet the dentist just for a chat, to see if I liked them
- I could address my dentist by their first name
- the dentist took things at my pace
- the dentist could assure me that treatment will be comfortable
- the dentist was very gentle
- the dentist was laid-back
- the dentist was serious
- the dentist had a sense of humour
- the dentist didn't wear a white coat or other colours I've come to associate with bad experiences
- I could trust the dentist
- the dentist would listen to me explaining my fears
- the dentist would respect my need not to be told everything upfront and would break "the bad news" gently
- the dentist was completely honest with me
- the dentist was very patient with me and didn't rush things
- the dentist wasn't bossy and did things together with me rather than to me
- I could work towards seeing a dentist with the help of a therapist or counsellor
- I could see a therapist or counsellor for other problems I'm experiencing first
- my partner, a friend or family member would be with me in the waiting room
- my partner, a friend or family member could be with me during treatment
- a female nurse or assistant was present at all times

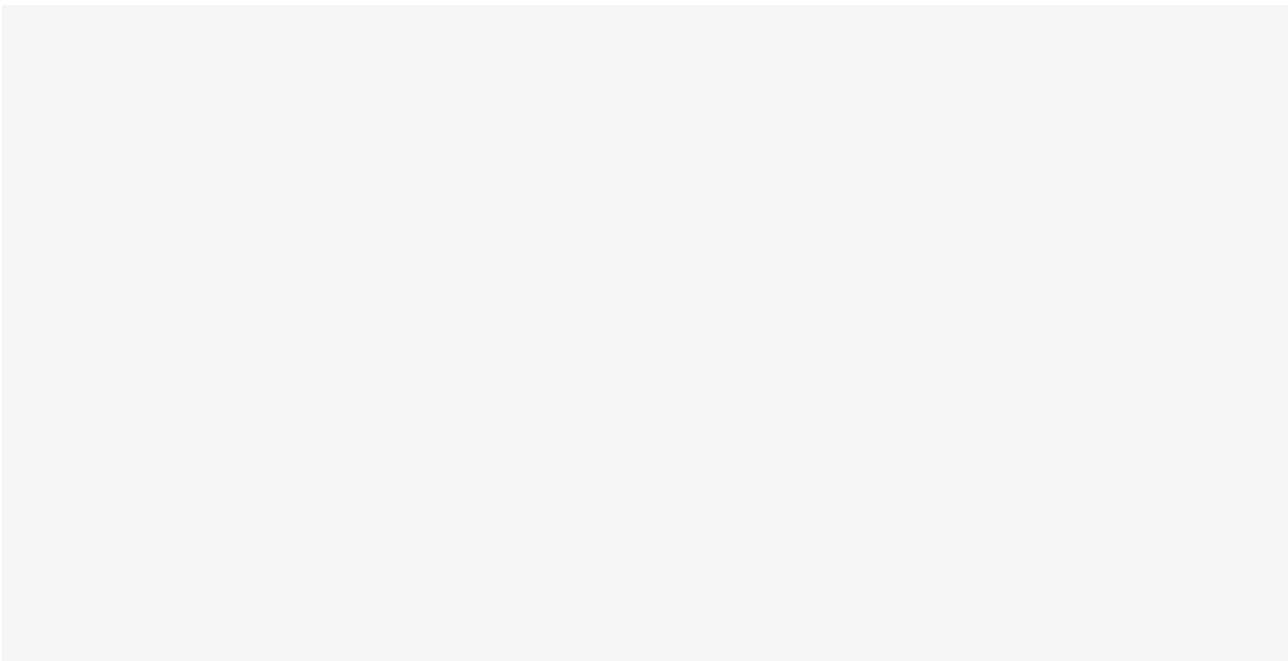
- the nurse or assistant held my hand
- the dentist and/or nurse touched me as little as possible
- I could let the dentist know about my fears in writing beforehand, because I would find it difficult to speak up
- other:

2. DENTAL VISITS

It might help me if...

- I would not be left waiting
- I could have an appointment first thing in the morning
- I could have an appointment later in the day
- I knew I wouldn't have to sit in "the chair" during the first appointment
- the dentist could have a quick look at my teeth outside the chair first
- the dentist would not call out numbers when looking at my teeth
- I knew that the dentist wouldn't use a pick (explorer), or would only do so very gently
- the dentist would work out a stop signal with me, such as raising a hand, and would stop whenever I felt like taking a break
- the dentist would allow me to "practice" giving the stop signal
- the dentist had some way of figuring out when I need a break or when I'm distressed, because I feel unable to give a stop signal
- the dentist would stop frequently to check if I'm OK, and only continue if I give the go-ahead
- the dentist would do the treatment in short bursts of time until I feel confident that I can cope
- the dentist explained to me in advance how a procedure will be done
- the dentist talked to me as they work, explaining each step of the procedure and what I will feel or hear

- the dentist would do some small and easy procedures first so that I could learn to trust them
- the dentist would check that I'm totally numb before starting any treatment
- the dentist could reassure me that treatment will be pain-free
- I knew as little as possible of what is going on
- I could have an anti-anxiety medication to allow me to attend my appointment
- I could be sedated during treatment
- I could have nitrous oxide (laughing gas) during treatment
- the dentist would do all the "big work" during one or more longer appointments first, so that it would be out of the way
- I could have shorter appointments
- I could have longer but fewer appointments
- the dentist would show me why they suggest each treatment, what the alternatives, and give me time to think about their suggestions
- the dentist would write down or email the different treatment options so that I can read up on them and think about them
- the dentist would show me what instruments they were going to use, explain how they work and demonstrate them to me, provided it's not too scary for me
- I were allowed to hold the suction tool myself
- I knew that there was a way of reducing or eliminating my gag reflex
- I could sit up during certain parts of the treatment
- I would not be tipped back too far
- injections would only be used when absolutely necessary
- I knew that the dentist was able to give painless injections
- other:



3. SELF-HELP

It might help me if...

- I could learn deep breathing techniques first
- I imagined myself in a calm and relaxing place, such as a beautiful garden or a beach
- I could bring my phone or mp3 player and listen to music on my headphones
- I could bring a blanket (or a weighted blanket) to cover myself during treatment
- I kept my eyes closed during treatment
- I kept my eyes open during treatment
- I brought a stress ball or a fidget widget
- I could bring my virtual-reality headset and watch a movie or play video games
- I could bring a comforting object, for example a soft toy or a lucky charm
- I wore dark sunglasses to block out bright lights
- other:

4. TECHNOLOGY

It might help me if...

- a numbing gel would be applied first so I couldn't feel the needle going in
- the dentist had a computer-controlled injection system such as The Wand
- I had some sort of gadget I could use to tell my dentist if I need a break
- there was music or the radio playing in the background
- I could watch TV/DVDs during treatment
- the dentist had a digital scanner to avoid having impressions taken
- some way could be found to reduce the gag reflex during x-rays
- an alternative injection technique could be used which reduces the numb sensation as this makes me panicky
- a local anaesthetic which doesn't contain epinephrine could be used, as I have had bad reactions to local anaesthetic reactions in the past
- other:

5. ENVIRONMENT

It might help me if...

- Instruments were hidden out of sight
- The door to the treatment room was left open
- There was no dental practice smell
- The practice didn't look too clinical
- There were no toys lying around in the waiting room
- There were no pictures or brochures of teeth in the waiting room

other:

You can find more suggestions for dealing with common fears in Dental Fear Central's [Common Fears](#) and [What Can Help](#) sections.

