

# FEAR LESS. SMILE MORE.

Overcome dental anxiety

For some people, a visit to the dentist can be scary. Between 9% and 20% of Americans avoid going to the dentist because of anxiety or fear.<sup>1</sup> But the good news is you can work with your dentist to make your visit easier.

## Recognizing the signs of dental phobia

Dental phobia is a serious problem. It causes panic and extreme fear. Here are signs that you may have a dental phobia:<sup>1</sup>

- › **Avoiding a dentist visit** until severe pain makes it necessary.
- › **Problems sleeping** before going to the dentist.
- › **Uneasy feelings** while waiting in the dental office.
- › **Feeling physically ill** when thinking about going to the dentist.
- › **Problems breathing** when getting dental care.

## Common dental fears

Realizing the cause of dental fears can help with the treatment. Some common dental fears are:<sup>1</sup>

- › **Fear of pain.** Can be caused by an early negative dental experience.
- › **Fear of shots.** Some people are scared of needles. Others also worry that the anesthesia given won't work and they'll still feel the pain.
- › **Side effects from anesthesia.** Some people worry about how the anesthesia will make them feel. They fear getting dizzy, being nauseated, or having a numb lip.
- › **Loss of personal space.** Many feel self-conscious with the physical closeness of the dentist or hygienist.
- › **Loss of control.** People sometimes struggle with not being able to see what's going on in their mouths.

## Control your fears

You can reduce your anxiety and improve your oral health. Here's how:<sup>1</sup>

- › **Communicate openly.** Discuss your dental fears with your dentist. Ask questions about your oral health and your treatment.
- › **Make a plan.** Your dentist should work with you to address your fears. If your dentist doesn't take your fears seriously, find another dentist.
- › **Express yourself.** Ask your dentist to explain what's happening. Establish a hand signal to use if you want the dentist to stop. Use the signal if you're uncomfortable. Or if you need to take a break.

1. WebMD, "Oral Care – Easing Dental Fear in Adults." Accessed May 22, 2015.

Together, all the way.<sup>SM</sup>



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