Many people have a fear of something. Some have a fear of heights. Some are afraid of closed-in spaces. Some have a fear of flying. One of the most common of all fears, however, is dental fear.

It is estimated that nearly 75% of adults in the U.S. have had a fear of the dentist at some point. Of those, 5 - 10% are categorized as dental phobics.

Despite advancements that optimize comfort, fear of dentistry has remained relatively constant over the past 50 years. It is ranked fourth among the most common fears.

Fear is not a bad thing. It's our brain's way of steering us away from something that doesn't feel right.

Yet, for adults who have fear or anxiety associated with dental visits, it's not unusual for its source to be a traumatic dental visit in their past.

Approximately 10% of the adult population are categorized as dental phobics. These are people who have such severe fears that the mere thought of going to the dentist is unnerving.

There is hope, however, for whatever level of fear you have.
Let me reassure you - your dental fear is nothing to be ashamed of, nor does it make you a ‘problem patient.’ Quite the contrary.

One of my greatest joys as a dentist is helping a once-fearful patient move past this fear and achieve a smile that looks as great as it feels!

What to look for in a dental office

Taking small steps at a comfortable pace is how most patients conquer dental fears and phobia.

✔ Visit the dentist’s web site. Look for images of the office interior, services, and comfort options. Look, also, for reviews from patients who once had dental fears.

✔ If you cannot make the call yourself, have a close friend or family member call and ask questions, such as:
  • Is the dentist experienced in treating fearful patients?
  • What comfort options are available?
  • Do they offer a consultation so fearful patients can get to know the dentist before scheduling an exam?
  • Where does the consultation take place? (In a private room or in a treatment chair?)

✔ Consider visiting the office after hours. Walk to the front door and look in. Become familiar with the location and building's appearance.

“The only dentist I trust to take care of me!!!!!”  -Deborah S
A consultation room that is away from the clinical area can provide a peaceful setting to discuss your particular needs without feeling anxious. This should be a private, closed room. If the consultation must take place in a treatment room, it may be best to look for another office.

Most dentists who are experienced with fearful patients understand their need to share their concerns. The dentist should listen without rushing you and answer your questions in easy-to-understand terms. You should leave feeling reassured about the dentist's commitment to your comfort.

Ask the dentist to explain sedation options. Nitrous oxide (‘laughing gas’) is a common method used for relaxation. Ask if other sedation options are available, such as Oral Sedation and I.V. Sedation.

When any sedation is used, ask about safety monitoring equipment and training of staff members who will be assisting the dentist. Your safety is as important as your comfort.

“I've been to several other dentists prior to seeing Dr. Barbat, and the difference is night and day. Dr. Barbat and her whole team were completely thorough with every step of the process. They made sure to explain everything they were doing in full detail so you didn't feel like you were in the dark for one second. Not only were they thorough, but every single member of the staff was kind and compassionate. I absolutely couldn't recommend a better place to go.”

-Lauren L
Sedation in dentistry

**ORAL SEDATION** is in pill form and taken prior to arriving at our office. Upon arrival, patients are fully relaxed. As the pill takes full effect, we seat you in a comfortable treatment chair and cover you with a warm blanket. Some patients doze off but are able to respond to questions.

**I.V. SEDATION** *(twilight sleep)* provides a deeper level of sedative than Oral Sedation. Although this is a more reassuring option for those preferring a sleep state, the recovery period is longer than that of Oral Sedation.

Both medications erase most or all memory of the procedure. And, with both, numbing is administered only after the patient is fully 'under.'

With both, you are monitored by a trained staff member throughout treatment to ensure your safety and comfort.

“I have always been afraid of the dentist because of childhood experiences. Almost 10 years ago I found Dr. Ban Barbat’s office and all those bad experiences are gone. Everyone is so friendly and cares. The office has worked with me all the time over the past 10 years, without that help I would never have the smile I have now. All the workers are A class staff from the moment you walk in the door till you leave. Highly recommend to anyone looking for the best! Love you all for my smile!” - Linda B
Our commitment to patient comfort goes beyond sedation. It extends to everyone involved in your care… from the friendly faces who greet you to the clinical team who assist you during treatment. **We want every visit to be a positive experience.**

In addition to sedation, we enhance comfort with options such as topical numbing before injections and ergonomically-designed treatment chairs. These features help to relax patients and make them more comfortable throughout any procedure.

We also utilize modern techniques and advanced technology to greatly enhance patient comfort and reduce time in treatment.

Yet, without a relationship of trust, these advancements do very little to help fearful patients **overcome** dental fears. Your trust in us will be the result of positive experiences at each visit as you realize our goal is to provide optimal comfort at every visit.

Not only are we are structured to help fearful patients move at a comfortable pace, you'll enjoy a setting where your concerns are truly respected in a 'lecture free' zone. Additional features include:

- **Soothing Office Environment:** When a dental office doesn’t have a look, feel or smell of a dental office, it can relax anxious patients from the get-go. For example, our reception area features a beverage bar and wide screen monitor of beautiful nature videos set to soothing music.
**Well-managed Appointments:** A long wait in a reception area can cause anxiety to build up. We want your brief wait to be a “catch your breath” opportunity, allowing you to relax. Our goal is to ensure our patients feel they are a priority from arrival through check-out. This is why we are committed to seeing patients within 10 minutes of their appointed time.

**Relaxing Distractions:** When patients listen to music or watch a movie during treatment, the focus is often taken off the procedure. For fearful patients, this can help. As you are being seated in the treatment chair, ask about music and video choices.

**Good Communication:** While some patients prefer to be distracted from what’s taking place in their mouths, others feel more confident knowing each step. Before and during a procedure, we keep those patients informed of what we are doing so they feel a sense of control. We also have monitors to show images of areas being treated for a better understanding of the treatment’s advantages.

**Committed Team:** Our entire team is ONE when it comes to creating a welcoming, respectful and compassionate environment for patients, especially those who have dental fears.

“As always, my dental care at Dr. Barbat's is a stress free experience ~ she and her staff always take great care of me. Dr. Barbat is a very knowledgeable and gentle dentist”. -Laura K
Finally…

I chose the dental profession because of the positive difference a healthy, attractive smile has on each person, inside and out!

Yet, my most rewarding moments occur when a once-fearful patient walks in all smiles with sedation no longer a need!

If dental fears are preventing you from a beautiful, healthy smile, remember that every journey begins with a first step. When you're ready, we are just a phone call away.

Dr. Ban R. Barbat
Where Lasting Smiles Begin

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