

# Guide For The Fearful Dental Patient

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## DENTAL FEAR IS PROBABLY MORE COMMON THAN YOU REALIZE

Many people have a fear of something, such as a fear of heights, being afraid of closed-in spaces or a fear of flying.

One of the most common fears, however, is dental fear (or *odontophobia*), **ranked 4th among the most common of all fears** (with 5 - 10% categorized as *dental phobics*).

When it comes to dental fear, it originates for many adults from memories of a traumatic dental visit. This fear tends to embed in the subconscious, creating a “fight or flight” reaction whenever dentistry comes into the picture.

First, let me reassure you - having dental fear does not mean that something is wrong with you, nor does it make you a ‘problem patient.’ One of my greatest joys as a dentist is helping a once-fearful patient move past this fear and achieve a healthy, confident smile.

The first step is understanding how to move forward. Some helpful ‘first steps’ include:

## FIND A DENTAL OFFICE THAT “FEELS” RIGHT FOR YOUR NEEDS

To select the dental office right for you...

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

▶ If you cannot make the call yourself, have a friend or family member call the office to ask: *Is the dentist trained and experienced in treating fearful patients? What comfort options are available? Do you offer an initial consultation to meet the dentist?*

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

▶ Ask to begin with a consultation. Many dental offices offer no-charge consults..

▶ The dentist should listen without rushing you and answer questions in easy-to-understand terms. You should leave feeling reassured about the dentist’s commitment to your comfort.

▶ Ask about sedation. While nitrous oxide (*‘laughing gas’*) is common for relaxation, Oral or I.V. sedation may be more appropriate for your needs.

▶ When sedation is used, ask about safety monitoring and training of staff who will assist the dentist. Your safety is as important as your comfort.

*“Wonderful experience. They are very friendly and honest. they help you overcome any fears and make going to the dentist a positive experience.”*

- Marylou S

## HELPFUL FEATURES

In our office, we have found that certain features help to reduce dental fears or anxiety. These include:

- ✔ **Well-managed Appointments:** A long wait in a reception area can allow anxiety to build. We are committed to seeing patients within 10 minutes of their appointed time.
- ✔ **Relaxing Distractions:** Listening to music or watching a movie during treatment can take the focus off the procedure.
- ✔ **Good Communication:** While some patients prefer to be distracted from what’s being done in their mouths, others feel better knowing each step. For those, we keep patients informed of what we are doing and use monitors to show images of areas to be treated.
- ✔ **Committed Team:** Our entire team is committed to offering a welcoming, respectful, and compassionate environment for all patients at every appointment.

## SEDATION IN DENTISTRY

In addition to many relaxing features in our office, we offer Oral and I.V. sedation.

**Oral Sedation** is in pill form. In less than 30 minutes, you will be very relaxed. As the pill takes full effect, we seat you in a comfortable treatment chair and cover you with a blanket. You may doze off but will remain able to respond, if needed.

**I.V. Sedation** (*twilight sleep*) provides a deeper level of sedation than oral sedation. This is a more reassuring option for those preferring a ‘sleep’ state. It does, however, require a longer recovery period than oral sedation.

Both medications erase most or all memory of the procedure afterward. And, with both, numbing the areas being treated is delayed until the full effects of the sedative begin. Throughout, you are monitored by trained staff who use advanced equipment to ensure your safety and comfort.

## AN ENVIRONMENT OF COMFORT

In addition to sedation, we enhance comfort with additional measures, such as topical numbing before injections and ergonomically-designed treatment chairs. We also utilize state-of-the-art technology to optimize patient comfort and reduce time in treatment.

25 YEARS

PROGRESSIVE DENTISTRY • OPTIMAL ORAL HEALTH & APPEARANCE

*Grateful for the smiles entrusted to our care*

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

## DENTAL CARE IS AN 'ESSENTIAL' PART OF YOUR OVERALL HEALTH

In addition to having a smile you love to share, the need to have good oral health has been acknowledged as vital through decades of research.

Nearly half of Americans aged 30 or older (47.3%) have some level of periodontal (gum) disease. Initial symptoms of periodontal disease include:

- tender, swollen gums that may bleed when brushing
- frequent bad breath
- gums that turn red in color (versus a healthy pink)
- gum recession, exposing sensitive root areas

While untreated gum disease is the nation's leading cause of adult tooth loss, the bacteria of advanced gum disease has been associated with serious health problems. This infectious bacteria can enter the bloodstream, causing inflammatory triggers that can activate or worsen serious health conditions, including heart disease, stroke, Alzheimer's disease, some cancers, arthritis, diabetes and more.

## MOVING FORWARD

Regardless of the comfort option you select, choosing a dentist who is right for you will have the greatest affect on your oral health goals.

Often, fearful patients relax after meeting the right doctor, receiving the care they need for a healthy smile.



*Dr. Barbat with once-fearful patient who has overcome her fears - for good!*

## 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 are when a once-fearful patient walks in all smiles with sedation no longer a need!

If dental fears prevent 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.

Call [586-739-2155](tel:586-739-2155) OR tap **Here** to arrange a free consultation.

*"I had to have extensive work on my teeth. It was even to the point, I was scared to eat, but my fear of dentist was worse. Dr. Barbat and her team changed all that. They do their best to make it pain free and relaxing. I now look forward to my appointments and always get compliments on my smile."*

- Joanne M



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