

Benefits Spotlight

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Conquering the dental chair: How to overcome common barriers to care

A healthy smile is essential not only for confidence but also for overall well-being. However, many people avoid going to the dentist for their recommended twice-yearly visits for various reasons. This is a big problem, because neglecting dental care can lead to more significant problems down the road. Here, we'll tackle some of the most common barriers and help you overcome them.

The biggest reasons people avoid the dentist

According to a 2022 CareQuest Institute for Oral Health Report entitled, "Americans Are Still Not Getting the Dental Care They Need," some of the top reasons people aren't seeing the dentist include:

- Cost (27%)
- No reason to go (11%)
- Dental anxiety (9%)¹

Let's take a closer look at each of these barriers and how they get in the way of your good health.

Navigating cost concerns

Cost can be a big reason why people don't see their dentist twice a year, especially for those without insurance coverage. Because these preventive checkups are so important to your overall and oral health, most Delta Dental of Iowa dental plans cover preventive dental visits when you see an in-network provider.

It's always a good idea to familiarize yourself with your dental insurance plan. Knowing what's covered and your out-of-pocket costs can help with budgeting and building confidence that you won't receive surprise bills.

Focusing on prevention

Many people don't see a reason to go to the dentist when they don't have a dental problem. But seeing your dentist for a preventive visit — when you don't have pain or another problem — is a wise health and financial move because these appointments are often less time consuming and less costly than a visit to treat dental problems that have been left unchecked.

Prevention is the best medicine when it comes to dental care. These twice-yearly appointments are good opportunities to meet with your dental team to discuss good oral hygiene habits at home, such as brushing twice a day, flossing regularly and avoiding sugary foods and drinks. In this way, preventive dental check-ups and cleanings can prevent cavities, gum disease and other dental problems.

Additionally, these regular dental checkups can identify and address potential problems early on, helping you avoid costly procedures.

Conquering dental anxiety

Dread fills the air at the mere mention of the dentist for many people. In fact, dental anxiety is common: About 36% of Americans fear visiting the dentist.²

Recognize that it's okay to feel anxious and share that openly with your dentist. Your dentist can create a calming environment, explain procedures step-by-step and offer relaxation techniques to help you feel more at ease during your visit.

If the thought of a full checkup overwhelms you, schedule a preliminary consultation. This allows you to meet the dentist, check out the office/exam rooms, discuss your concerns and build trust before undergoing any procedures.

For more severe cases of dental fear and anxiety, sedation dentistry may help. Some dentists offer nitrous oxide ("laughing gas") or oral sedation for anxious patients. These methods can reduce anxiety and make the dental office experience more comfortable.

Break down the barriers to your good oral health

Seeing your dentist twice a year for dental checkups is a smart health move. The first step is finding a dentist you trust, because the right dentist can make all the difference. Look for one who has a gentle touch, is considerate with your questions and understands your concerns. Delta Dental's online [Find a Provider](#) tool is the best place to start your search.

Good oral health shouldn't come at the cost of anxiety, financial worries or a misunderstanding around the importance of prevention. By understanding and overcoming these common barriers, you can confidently schedule your next dental appointment and keep your smile healthy for years to come.

REFERENCES:

1. [CareQuest Institute for Oral Health](#)
2. [Cleveland Clinic](#)

Dental care mythbusting for moms-to-be

Pregnancy is a whirlwind of emotions and information. Among the many questions expecting mothers have is whether dental care is safe during pregnancy. The simple answer is “yes,” but myths about pregnancy and dental care can lead to a lot of confusion. Here, we break down these misconceptions to help you stay informed and healthy during your pregnancy.

Myth #1: Skip the dentist while pregnant

The American Dental Association recommends regular dental checkups during pregnancy for the following reasons¹:

- *Hormonal changes and oral health:* Pregnancy hormones can increase your risk of developing cavities and gingivitis, which is the early form of gum disease and causes inflamed gums. Twice-yearly cleanings and checkups help prevent these issues.
- *Preterm birth and low birth weight:* Research suggests a link between poor oral health and pregnancy complications like premature birth and low birth weight.²

Myth #2: X-rays and medication are unsafe during pregnancy

Modern dental X-rays use minimal radiation and shielding to protect mom and baby. Your dentist will adjust procedures and medications based on your pregnancy stage, ensuring everyone's safety.

Myth #3: All dental procedures should wait until after birth

While some complex procedures might be postponed, many dental treatments can be done safely during pregnancy. Plus, regular dental care increases the chances that your dentist will detect and treat problems before they cause major complications.

Benefits of dental care during pregnancy

Seeing your dentist during your pregnancy will ensure that any problems are identified and addressed early, when they are easier to treat. Good oral hygiene during pregnancy also helps set the stage for a healthier pregnancy, as proper dental care may lower the risk of preterm birth and low birth weight.

Dental care during pregnancy is not only safe but also important for the well-being of both you and your baby. By prioritizing your oral health, you're giving your little one the best possible start. Talk with your dentist about your pregnancy and any concerns you have. They will answer your questions, help clarify any confusion and support you during this special time.

REFERENCE:

1. [American Dental Association](#)
2. [JDR Clinical & Translational Research](#)