

DENTAL PHOBIA

All phobias, including dental fear, are very real and very personal. Dental fear can be harmful to your health, but can be overcome. The first step is openly discussing your fearfulness with your dentist.

If you are anxious about going to the dentist, you are not alone. About 80% of the population is apprehensive about dental appointments. Dental fear is not limited to age, sex, race or economic differences. Almost 30% of the population (possibly higher) may avoid going to the dentist altogether, due to fear. Fortunately, there have been considerable advances in dentistry that have made treatment more comfortable. One of these treatments is one pill (oral) sedation, which I will discuss later.

The most common causes for dental fear includes the fear of pain, the loss of being in control, being embarrassed by the condition of one's mouth or the fear of dental instruments and associated sounds. Many of these fears stem from uncomfortable past experiences. (Last month, I discussed how first experiences could be made more pleasant for a child).

There are many anxiety management techniques that can be utilized to overcome fears including distraction therapy, relaxation techniques and possibly biofeedback. I have found that sedation dentistry can provide the answer for many with dental anxieties. One pill sedation takes the fear out of dentistry by allowing patients to be relaxed just enough to be unaware of the dental treatment taking place.

Sedation dentistry is also useful for people with bad gag reflexes or aversion to needles. With one pill (oral) sedation, there is no I.V. induction of medication. In most situations, a great amount of dentistry, including cosmetic dental makeovers, may be performed in one appointment, thus reducing the number of appointments that are needed for treatment. It offers a stress and anxiety-free dental appointment.

Patients should never be embarrassed by their fears or the condition of their mouth because of a lack of past care. This is far more common than you may realize. I give a lot of credit for those who make that initial step to schedule an appointment. Dental fears are very real and can create long-term harmful effects on your oral and physical health. Depending on the fears you may have, a step by step approach to dental treatment with a sensitive dentist and staff will go a long way to getting you the treatment you need and deserve.