

There is No Excuse for No Dental Care - Overcoming Dental Phobias



By Harvey Levy, DMD, MAGD

I have been practicing clinical dentistry and been on this planet long enough to have heard every reasonable excuse for avoiding dental care. I have yet to hear a good one.

Our dental practice has successfully treated thousands of phobic, anxious, mentally challenged, autistic, and medically compromised patients. We've been able to accommodate infants through Alzheimers patients. What I have learned is whatever the reason given for avoiding the dental office, there's always a way to overcome the problem.

Are you afraid of the dentist? Perhaps a dry-run walking through the office will calm you down, or learning more about the treatment using videos or demo models will make you less afraid. If it doesn't, we can prescribe pills or liquid drugs that you can take right before your appointment. If you're even more apprehensive, you can also take an oral sedation pill before going to bed the night before your appointment, and be treated with nitrous oxide (laughing gas) to relax you during treatment. Other options to deal with anxiety include behavior modification, hypnosis or acupuncture.

If your loved one is an infant, or is mentally challenged, autistic, or suffers from Alzheimers, they can and should still receive effective dental treatment. Intravenous sedation can be offered in an office setting, or these patients can be treated in a hospital or surgical center operating room. There, the patient is totally asleep while all the needed work is being performed, and has no recollection when they wake up.

An extremely anxious patient can also be treated in this manner, with the advantage that work that would typically require multiple office visits can be successfully performed in only one visit to the O.R.

If you cannot come to the office due to mobility issues, age, or medical complications, dentists with portable equipment can come to you, be it in a nursing home, private home, institution, or in-patient facility. Mobile vans are fully equipped to handle most dental problems. Mobile teams use hand-held x-ray units with self-developing films or laptop instant imaging systems to diagnose problems. Portable x-rays with protective radiation barriers, are coupled with mobile dental carts, and provide the same dental procedures available at the office.

Whatever reason kept you or your loved one away from the dentist, the road back is readily available and easier than you think! Over the past 38 years our practice has successfully performed over 32,000 oral sedations in our office. Three percent of the time, oral sedations at our office couldn't be done, or failed due to autism, severe combativeness, or major medical concerns. All those patients were able to receive treatment, safely and successfully, with the help of an anesthesiologist in a hospital operating room.

Whatever excuse I hear for someone not going to the dentist, know that there's always a way to overcome it. What is not acceptable are the complications resulting from the lack of dental care – from bad breath to infections that start in the mouth and threaten your health.



Harvey Levy, DMD, MAGD is a 1974 Tufts Dental graduate who practices general and hospital dentistry in Frederick, MD. He holds eight fellowships, four diplomats, Board certification in Integrative Medicine, and has earned Mastership and three Lifelong Learning Service recognition awards from the Academy of General Dentistry. He is a recipient of the ADA Access to Care Award, the AGD Humanitarian Award, the Maryland Governor's Doctor of the Year Award, and ran the 2002 Winter

Olympic Torch in honor of his dental care for special-needs patients in Maryland. He has written and lectured extensively on management of anxious and special-needs patients. For more information, visit www.DrHLevyAssoc.com or contact him at drhlevy@gmail.com

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