Anxiety-Free Dental Visits

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Getting Your Dental Care Completed if You Live With Severe Anxiety

If you're prone to anxiety, then chances are you've avoided dental care as much as possible. Even people who aren't typically anxious experience nervousness, sweating, high blood pressure, or even fainting when they're visiting the dentist. Dental teams understand that "white coat syndrome" is very real and are becoming more and more sensitive to accommodating the needs of patients who have anxiety related to dental care.

There are different techniques that dental offices use to create relaxing, comfortable experiences for their patients. They vary from mild techniques like having a more personable office to treatments for severe anxiety that include various levels of sedation services. In fact, more and more people are choosing to have sedation dentistry regularly simply because it helps them create a positive experience no matter what type of treatment they need.

Here are some examples of options that you can choose from your dentist to improve your care visit. These can be used for any type of treatment, including cleanings. Perhaps the biggest benefit is that you can typically have all of your treatment completed in just a single appointment.

Nitrous Oxide

Laughing gas is the traditional, easy-to-access relaxation medication used in dental offices. It has a rapid onset time and is perfectly cleared of your system within 5 minutes. Nitrous gas is mixed with oxygen to create a relaxed, sometimes sleepy feeling. Fingers and toes may feel tingly. Contraindications for nitrous oxide use include sinus problems that prevent you from breathing comfortably out of your nose since the gas is delivered through a nose piece.

Light Oral Sedation

Depending on your dental office, they may call this something else, but the technique involves an orally administered prescription sedative. Some offices will give you an anxiety medication to take the night before so that you can get a good night's rest. About an hour before your treatment, you'll take the oral dose of medication, and if needed, a second dose at the time of treatment. Although you're not fully unconscious and can respond to brief yes-or-no questions, most people feel like they're napping and won't remember a single thing about their appointment. It can take a few hours after the treatment for the medication to wear off as it has only a set effective time per dose.

IV Sedation

A deeper level of sedation can be achieved by using IV medications. Some dentists do offer this in their office, or they may have a partnership with a local surgical center with an on-staff anesthesiologist. The benefit of IV sedation is that the medication takes effect immediately, can be cut off when treatment is completed and renders

patients completely unconscious.

Not all dental offices offer each of the services above (except Nitrous Oxide). Research dental care providers or call their office first before setting up an exam or consultation with the dentist. These services are becoming so common that you won’t have to worry about a receptionist or assistant judging you for requesting them. In fact, many dentists are now using these techniques to draw in more patients than ever before!