

Dentist appointment "do's and don'ts" for best results

May 19 2014, by Anne Dillon



Many dread a trip to the dentist, but there are important things you need to do, and not do, beforehand to have a successful visit. Communicating with your dentist before the visit is often critical.

"If you have experienced a serious [health condition](#) such as a surgery or been diagnosed with a chronic condition, you need to tell your [dentist](#) before you come for your appointment," said Martin Hogan, DDS, division director of the Oral Health Center at Loyola University Medical

Center. "Depending on the illness, you may need to be premedicated with antibiotics to prevent infection."

Hogan said many [patients](#) wait until they are in the dentist chair to inform dental staff of major medical developments.

"Pretreatment one hour before the appointment with an antibiotic is recommended for patients with certain health conditions," he said. "The appointment must be rescheduled if that hasn't happened, resulting in a wasted trip."

Taking prescribed antibiotics one hour before the dental appointment helps reduce the amount of bacteria entering the bloodstream during specific dental procedures, such as cleaning and drilling.

"Board-certified dentists are in constant communication with our physician colleagues regarding patients and their needs," said Hogan, who treats many cancer, diabetic and [heart patients](#) at the academic [medical center](#). "Dentists are constantly working with the American Heart Association and the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons to fine-tune these guidelines for best patient safety practices."

More commonly, patients aggressively step up dental hygiene when a dentist appointment nears. "Sometimes we will see the [gum tissue](#) slightly irritated and when asking patients about this, they mention that they have been flossing 'extra hard' the past few days in anticipation of their dental visit," Hogan said. "Other times we may see the gum tissue slightly dried out, which often is caused by excessive use of alcohol-containing mouth rinses."

Hogan said gum tissue can also recede due to overaggressive tooth brushing.

"Breakdown of gum tissue can occur from months and years of rigorous tooth brushing," Hogan said. "Hard brushing a few days before a visit to the dentist should not cause permanent damage."

Before a visit to the dentist, just maintaining your normal routine is recommended.

"Just stick with good oral hygiene and home care on a regular basis and your teeth should be fine," said Hogan, who has been practicing dentistry for five years. Good oral hygiene means brushing two to three times per day and flossing once a day.

"Mouth rinses and mouthwash help reduce plaque and can aid in keeping gum tissue healthy," said Hogan, who sees patients of all ages at his Loyola practice. "Using mouthwash is a good habit, together with brushing and flossing."

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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