

A Focus on Comfort

"The noise of the drill drives me crazy!"

"These chairs hurt my back."

"Can you get that bright light out of my eyes?"

"Are you going to use a needle?"

"My jaw gets so sore holding open for that long..."

"I get absolutely terrified even being in the office."

Have you ever found yourself thinking or saying things like this during your visit to the dentist? It seems to be universal to expect some anxiety or discomfort in the dental chair. There are many different ways, however, to make your visit more pleasant, or even enjoyable! Our office has been offering these comfort measures for years and our patients really seem to appreciate it.

The noise aspect is one of the things we hear most often, and the solution is really pretty simple. We suggest that patients bring a portable music player with headphones to the appointment. Most people have an iPod or other mp3 player, a cd player, or even a simple radio. For those who forget or do not have one, we offer them in the office, but can't guarantee we will have the music they like! Crank up the volume and the noise of the drill just disappears! The music also helps to distract you and to relax, resulting in an appointment that seems much shorter and easier.

Another way to make our patients more comfortable is by offering pillows, blankets, and tinted safety glasses. Some people think the dental chair is

extremely comfortable and want one for their house (!), while the next patient may not fit it the same. Pillows under the neck or lumbar area and a nice warm blanket make the experience more relaxing and you don't get as sore from lying there. For those who will be in for an extra long visit, like a patient who will be sedated, we also offer a memory foam chair pad. The tinted glasses block the bright dental light and patients often drift off to sleep!

One of the greatest inventions towards patient comfort, dental anesthesia, is also one of the things patients still dislike the most. Often, the use of a syringe to numb the mouth is a necessity in assuring your comfort throughout the visit. A caring and gentle dentist concerned about your comfort and with the knowledge of how to administer anesthetics in special ways to minimize discomfort can most of the time sneak a shot in there easily. I love it when a patient says, "Was that the shot? I didn't even feel it!" That being said, technology is allowing us to often forgo the shot all together. The use of a laser diagnostic device can find decay in teeth at very early stages and while they are very shallow, allowing conservative fillings to be done with a special tool. No numbing of any kind is usually necessary and there should be no discomfort at all! It pays to catch things early.

Holding your jaw open for long periods of time can lead to soreness long after the appointment is over. For that reason, we offer a specialized dental mouth prop, which does the job for you, allowing you to relax your jaws while giving great access for your dentist to do their work. On some cases, we may even use what is known as an Isolite, which props your mouth open and places a barrier in the back of your mouth, while also suctioning, retracting your tongue, and illuminating the oral

cavity from within. It provides great visibility for the dentist and comfort for the patient.

Medications can also make the visit easier. Nitrous oxide (laughing gas) can ease your tension and dull your senses. Some patients require a sedative prior to the appointment. Those who need it may also request Oral Conscious Sedation. This is a technique that allows patients to be relaxed during the dental visit and not even remember it when it is over! Medication is given before the appointment and then more is given as needed under the tongue throughout the visit to assure an easy visit. Your vital signs are monitored to assure safety, and much more can be done in a single visit, minimizing return trips. Our office is proud to be one of the few trained to offer this method of sedation in all of West Tennessee.

There are always ways to make your visit to the dentist easier. Be sure to let your doctor know what aspects of the appointment bother you and we will do our best to make it better!