

Don't let fear get in the way of your oral health

Dental anxiety: What you should know



It's common to feel a little nervous about going to the dentist. But if those nerves ever get so overwhelming that they cause you to delay appointments or cancel them altogether, you may be suffering from dental anxiety. Here are some tips and information to help you overcome dental anxiety so you can keep up with your regular dental visits, which are a key part of maintaining your oral health.*

Identify your fears

Understanding the root of your anxiety is important so that you can communicate and address it specifically. Some common reasons for fear include:

- › Pain
- › Previous traumatic dental experiences
- › Loss of control
- › History of generalized anxiety disorder
- › Lack of trust in dentist
- › Needles and drilling
- › Invasion of personal space
- › Anesthesia wearing off or having side effects

Recognize the signs and symptoms

People living with dental anxiety have more extreme nerves about going to the dentist, which can lead to symptoms, such as:

- › Heart palpitations
- › Panic attacks
- › Drop in blood pressure
- › Aggressive behavior
- › Excessive sweating
- › Crying
- › Feeling faint



Schedule a check-up today

To find an in-network dentist near you, go to [myCigna.com](https://mycigna.com).

Learn healthy coping strategies that can help

Here are some simple things you can do to help ease your anxiety and get you in the dentist's chair.

Speak up – When you call your dentist's office to schedule your appointment, let them know if you're feeling anxious. They can answer any questions you might have and may also be able to suggest ways to help you relax before and during your visit. You can also speak to a dentist beforehand via Cigna Dental Virtual Care by logging in to your myCigna account.**

Practice mindfulness – There are many techniques that can help you relax your mind, such as breathing exercises, meditation and visualization. Determine which one works best for you.

Bring a distraction – See if you can watch TV or a movie or listen to music through headphones during your appointment.

Tap into your support system – Ask a close friend or family member to come with you to your appointment. Your dentist may even allow them to come into the exam room with you; just ask.

Ask about your medication options – You may have multiple medication options to consider, including nitrous oxide (laughing gas), oral anxiety medication, oral sedatives and dental anesthesia. Talk to your doctor or dentist about any that may be right for you.

* Higuera, Valencia. (2021, April 15). "Coping with Dental Anxiety." Healthline. <https://www.healthline.com/health/anxiety/dental-anxiety>

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