



Patients Relaxing In Dental Spas

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BACKGROUND: One of the main reasons most people avoid visiting the dentist is dental anxiety. Dental anxiety drives some people to create more dental problems by not visiting the dentist on a regular basis. According to Floss.com, between nine percent and 15 percent of the American population -- about 30 million to 40 million people -- avoid essential dental care because of fear or anxiety.

WHY FEAR THE DENTIST? According to Michael Krochak, D.M.D., founder and director of the Dental Phobia Treatment Center in New York City, negative portrayals of dentists in movies, TV, and newspapers contribute to the widespread fear of the dentist's office. Previous negative experiences at the dentist can cause dental phobias. Another reason some may fear the dentist is because of embarrassment about hygiene and fear of being judged or lectured.

REFLEXOLOGY IN DENTISTRY: Reflexology is an ancient technique that connects pressure points on the hands and feet to organ systems in the body. In dentistry, massage therapists apply reflexology techniques to assist in relaxation and anesthesia. During a dental visit, tension occurs mainly in the shoulders, head and neck. Reflexology helps to relieve tension in the upper body and allows the facial muscles to relax. As a patient relaxes, the flow of blood slows as the breathing pattern decreases, which helps the doctor administer anesthesia more effectively. "If we're working on a patient that is relaxed, it makes our job a lot easier," Debra King, D.D.S., president of the Atlanta Center for Cosmetic Dentistry, was quoted as saying.

PAMPERING AT THE DENTIST: The next time you want a relaxing day at the spa, consider stopping by the dentist. According to the American Dental Association, about five percent of dental offices are considered "dental spas." At the Mitchell Dental Spa in Chicago, patients are treated to complimentary champagne in the waiting room, along with a facial massage. At the Atlanta Center for Cosmetic Dentistry, patients are loosened up in a vibrating "Zen Chair" before their appointment, free of charge. The amenities at the More Smiles Dental Spa in Louisiana include personal music, refreshments, massage pads, overhead TV's, warm blankets and a reading desk to personalize the experience. More Smiles even offers manicures and pedicures and a Louisiana cuisine **lunch** to make their patients as comfortable as possible. At most dental spas, the price of these extra perks depends on your insurance policy.