

Q How can I look after my teeth?

A The British Dental Health Foundation recommends the following simple routine to help avoid dental disease.

- brush your teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste. This means cleaning. You also need to clean all the surfaces of your teeth and this involves more than just brushing. You need to clean between your teeth too. Your dentist or hygienist will show you the best techniques.
- cut down on how often you have sugary food and drink. It is better for your teeth if you limit them to mealtimes.
- visit your dentist as often as they recommend. Remember, use your dental team for advice to help you avoid treatment rather than waiting for the problems to happen.



The British Dental Health Foundation is an independent, UK-based charity dedicated to promoting the benefits of good oral health to the public throughout the world.

The Foundation promotes three key messages:

- brush your teeth twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste.
- cut down on how often you have sugary foods and drinks.
- visit your dentist regularly, as often as they recommend.



Look for our 'Approved' symbol on oral health products. You can trust these products to live up to the claims on their packaging.

The Dental Helpline is the Foundation's own confidential advice service. Qualified dental professionals are available to answer your questions personally from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. Or you can send us a question by email from our website at any time.

 **Dental
Helpline**
0845 063 1188
www.dentalhelpline.org

It costs the Foundation £5 for every enquiry we answer. If you would like to make a donation, please send a cheque to the address below, or phone 01788 538793 to donate by credit or debit card.

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Tell me about

Relaxation and sedation





Q Is there anything that can help me with my fear of the dentist?

A Yes. Some people are so frightened of the dentist that they will not go for dental treatment. They can overcome their fears with relaxation or sedation. Dentists today are sympathetic about these feelings, and you can ask your dentist about these ways to help.

Q What is sedation?

A Your dentist may recommend an intravenous or 'IV' sedation. This is given by injection, either in the back of your hand or in your arm. The dose will depend on the amount of treatment needed and how long it will take to complete.

Q How will IV sedation in the surgery affect me?

A You become drowsy and unaware of any treatment, but you are still able to co-operate with the dentist. The effects of a sedative medicine take some time to wear off and your dentist will tell you how long the drugs will take to clear from your body. You won't be able to drink alcohol, drive or work machinery during this time.

Q What else can help?

A You can be helped to feel relaxed by 'relative analgesia' sometimes known as inhalation sedation. This means breathing in a mixture of nitrous oxide and oxygen ('laughing gas') which quickly leads to a pleasant, relaxed feeling. The dentist puts you at ease at the same time, by talking softly and suggesting what you feel. You remain conscious all the time, although you may be a little drowsy, and any treatment given causes you no discomfort.

You breathe in the mixture through a nosepiece, which is very comfortable. You can't overdose on the gas, as the mixture quickly leaves the body if you breathe in one or two breaths of ordinary air. There are no after-effects either, and you can drive a car after about 15 minutes. Many dentists use this safe and effective technique.

Q How does relaxation work?

A When we are faced with a challenge or something we're afraid of, such as a visit to the dentist, our bodies produce substances, which raise our anxiety. However, we can train our bodies to work against this anxiety, by learning to relax. It's not possible to be anxious and relaxed at the same time, so learning relaxation helps control our anxiety.

If you are a mother, you may have learned some relaxation techniques in childbirth classes. In fact, almost anyone can learn them. You can practice at home. Some people find that meditation and yoga work well, too.

Q What about hypnosis?

A Hypnosis is a way of relaxing where you concentrate on suggestions of relaxation given by the hypnotist. It's a bit like daydreaming, although you are awake and in total control.

Q How do I know which technique is right for me?

A Talk to your dentist. Most people can use relaxation techniques, but relative analgesia and sedation may not be suitable for everyone. Your dentist will tell you. You also need to tell your dentist about any medicines you may be taking, whether or not your doctor prescribes them.

Q How much does it cost?

A Some of the techniques may be carried out under the National Health Service, but some dentists charge privately. Talk to your dentist, and discuss the costs fully before you commit yourself to treatment. Always get a written estimate before starting any treatment.

Q Are there any other techniques that may help before I get to the dentist?

A Some people need something more to help them overcome their fears. The dentist or doctor may give you a sedative medicine, either in tablet or liquid form that you can take before you visit to relax you.

