



Finding Dr. Right, Part 3

So you have a few names of dentists that meet your basic criteria and want to decide which office to try first. The next step—call the office-- should be fun and quite revealing. Don't be afraid to ask questions. Any office that will not take the time to answer all of your questions as a new patient will have no time for you later. Most good offices understand that and drill it into all of the staff.

When you call, try to make an objective assessment, but do not be too quick to judge. Everyone has bad days. The staff should not be rude, and should readily offer specific answers. There are hundreds of questions you can ask, and many that won't be of any help, so I will just give you a sample of what you might want to know and what questions probably will not reveal much. If you have specific questions for the doctor, they should be willing to arrange for you to talk to him/her.

First, confirm some of the items that you know are important to you: How do they work with your insurance? What are the hours? What about parking? Will they treat your children? Do they do whitening? Implants? Do the appointments usually run on time? Can I get a treatment plan with fees? How long will I have to wait for an appointment?

Next, maybe find out something about their qualifications, areas of expertise, or associations. Are they members of any dental associations? Are they involved in continuing education? Do they concentrate on any specific areas of dentistry? Do they refer to specialists often? These questions are all of limited value, but may give you some indication of how progressive the office is.

Then, ask some specific questions about office policy. Do you accept payment from my insurance? Do you accept credit cards? What if I have to cancel? Do you give any discounts? Do you set up payment plans for large amounts? Is there a fee for consultations? How often do you take x-rays? Can you get the records from my previous office? Do you have an office brochure that you could send me? Is the dentist available for emergencies?

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