

# Are You Afraid Of The Dentist? End Dental Anxiety and Fear.

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## 1 What is Dentophobia?

Dentophobia (dental fear) is a unique phobia with special psychosomatic components that impact on the dental health of the odontophobic persons. For some individuals, dental fear may be so great that normal life is impaired. In these instances, the individual experiences fear or anxiety that is out of proportion to the actual danger present in the situation. This often leads to avoidance behavior, and clinically significant levels of distress or impaired functioning.<sup>1</sup>

## 2 How Common is it?

According to statistics from the Oral Health Foundation, almost half of UK adults have a fear of the dentist, with 12% of these suffering from an extreme dental anxiety or phobia. However, as many people do not feel comfortable talking about their fears, it is thought that these figures could be a lot higher.<sup>3</sup>

## 3 What are the causes?

- Embarrassment over state of oral health
- Concerns about pain
- Sensitive gag reflex or sensitive teeth
- Negative past experience
- Fear of dental instruments
- Uncertainty about a new procedure

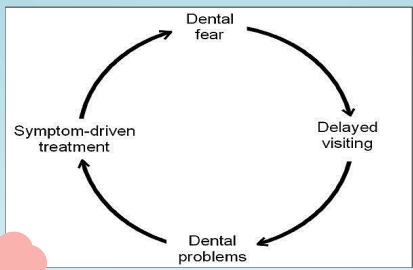


Fig. (1) Model of the vicious cycle of dental fear. 5

## 4 Study case

The aim of the study was to evaluate the anxiety levels of patients attending a university oral diagnosis clinic. Avoidance, felt physiologic responses, and the most fear-producing stimuli of dental treatment were also evaluated.

**Method and Materials:** A total of 1,437 patients were asked to complete a questionnaire consisting of the Dental Anxiety Scale (DAS), Dental Fear Scale (DFS), and questions about age, gender, education level, and frequency of dental visits.

**Results:** The mean DAS score was 9.52 (SD 4.08) for females, 7.96 (SD 3.30) for males, and 8.76 (SD 3.80) for the total sample. There was no statistically significant difference between the mean DAS scores of age groups. Patients who had never visited the dentist had the highest anxiety scores. According to the DFS, the most felt autonomic response was increased heart rate, and the most fear-producing stimuli were the sight of the needle (25.1%) and sensation of the injection (24.1%). Of the patients 10.5% avoided calling for an appointment, and 4.9% canceled or did not appear for appointment.

**Conclusion:** Some patients are afraid of some of the stimuli involved with dental treatment. This could affect the patient-dentist relationship and the dental treatment plan; therefore, before dental treatment, patients' anxiety and fear levels should be assessed and managed. 2

## 6 Steps to take as a dentist :

- For all patients, establish good two-way communication, build rapport, and always aim to foster a trusting relationship.
- Appropriately identify the anxious person and their specific concerns, worries, comorbidities and issues.
- Work with the patient to establish a treatment plan which is flexible and organized in phases and which works well for the patient.
- Use various behavioral and cognitive anxiety management techniques to help the patient undergo the treatment phases.
- Consider pharmacological anxiety management approaches in consultation with the patient.<sup>4</sup>

## 7 Conclusion

Dental anxiety or dental fear, is a widespread problem that represents one of the major barriers to dental care. it remains a challenge to todays dentists, This issue can have an important effect on an individual's dental health. No matter what the initial cause is, understanding dental anxiety is the key to effective management.

## 5 Complications of dentophobia

- Dental caries.(2)
- Periodontal diseases.(3)
- Tooth Erosion.(4)
- Oral infections.(5)
- Calculus.(6)



## 8 References

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