



## **DENTAL ANXIETY AND FEAR:**

Do you experience anxiety, fear, or a phobia related to dental care? If so, you're not alone! It is currently suggested that approximately 50% of Americans do not seek regular dental care, and of those people, an estimated 9-15% are avoiding the dentist due to some level of anxiety or fear. To put this in perspective, this statistic equates to 30-40 million people who need assistance managing their fear of the dentist. Dr. Koch uses a variety of techniques and devices to help anxious patients receive treatment in a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere.

### **OPEN COMMUNICATION is the key to managing “dental anxiety, fear, and phobia”:**

- Informing both the dentist and dental team members regarding treatment concerns is vital to helping avoid a reoccurrence of past unpleasant experiences.
- Depending on your wishes, we can describe procedures in maximum or minimum detail to make you feel at ease. For some patients, understanding treatment can provide “peace of mind” while others prefer only a cursory discussion.
- Patients should understand that they are always in control and can stop a procedure at any time if they are feeling uncomfortable. In addition, our appointments have ample time built in for comfort breaks as needed.
- Above and beyond all else, we are committed to gaining and maintaining your trust while ensuring that you have an outstanding experience in our office.

### **PROFOUND LOCAL ANESTHETIC is the key to managing the “fear of pain”:**

- Today's local anesthetics such as Lidocaine and Articaine are more potent and long lasting than anesthetics of the past such as Novocaine. They also exhibit quicker onset and provide 2.5 to 3 hours of numbness, which is longer than the duration of most dental appointments.
- If you ever experience pain while receiving dental treatment, simply raise your left hand and we will stop immediately to identify and address the problem. We want you to be comfortable at all times.

### **ORAL SEDATION is the key to managing the “fear of treatment”:**

- Many patients have anxiety about the entire treatment process, from numbing to actual treatment on the teeth and gums.
- Triazolam, also known as Halcion, is a safe and effective **oral sedation** medication which has an ideal combination of the following effects – anxiety reduction (anxiolysis), sleep induction (hypnosis), and partial loss of memory (amnesia).
- Use of Halcion requires medical clearance from your physician as well as a trusted friend or family member who can provide transportation to and from your dental appointment in our office.
- If a patient requires a surgical procedure such as extraction of impacted wisdom teeth, Dr. Koch will refer to a specialist who can perform the treatment under **intravenous (I.V.) sedation**. However, this level of sedation is not required for routine procedures such as teeth cleanings, fillings, crowns, etc.

### **NOISE DISTRACTION is the key to managing the “fear of the dental drill”:**

- Although the noise of dental equipment can be unpleasant, most patients who fear the dental drill actually have a fear of pain resulting from a past scenario in which a tooth was not sufficiently numb.
- We encourage patients to bring an mp3 player or smartphone pre-loaded with their favorite music and we will provide “over the ear” Seinheiser headphones and disposable headphone covers for your use. Patients may bring their own headphones, but we specifically recommend “over the ear” headphones such as Bose Noise Cancelling headphones instead of “in-ear” and “earbud” headphones.

### **DESENSITIZATION AND DISTRACTION is the key to managing the “fear of gagging”:**

- Numbing the soft palate with a “sore throat” spray such as Chloraseptic, applying salt to the tongue, or massaging a chemical ice bag with the hands can all send signals to the brain to “trick” the gag reflex from occurring.
- Distraction techniques include humming, lifting feet while in the dental chair, and acupressure such as squeezing the left thumb in a tight fist or applying pressure to the Hegu point, the concave place between the thumb and index finger.
- Diaphragmatic breathing through the nose can relax the body. Nasal breathing can be facilitated with decongestants, nasal irrigation with a Neti pot, and/or use of “Breathe Right” Nasal Strips.