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How do I find a dentist?

- Ask family, friends, neighbors or co-workers for recommendations.
- Ask your family physician or local pharmacist.
- If you are moving, your current dentist may be able to make a recommendation.
- The Oregon Dental Association's website at www.oregondental.org has a "Find A Dentist" section of its members that is very user-friendly.
- Use the American Dental Association's Member Directory at www.ada.org.
- Comparison shop. You may want to call or visit more than one dental office before making a decision since dental care is a very personalized service that requires a good relationship between the dentist and the patient. If you are comparing fees, ask for estimates on full-mouth x-rays and a preventive dental visit that includes an oral exam and tooth cleaning.

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What should I look for when choosing a dentist?

During your first visit, you should be able to determine if this is the right dental office for you. Consider the following:

- Is the appointment schedule convenient for you?
- Is the office easy to get to from your home or job?
- Does the office appear to be clean, neat and orderly? Are infection control procedures in place? The dental care staff should use "universal precautions" such as gloves, mask and appropriate protective garb and routinely sterilize and disinfect instruments and the work area to protect against spreading infectious diseases.
- Was your medical and dental history recorded and placed in a permanent file? (This record should be updated periodically. On subsequent visits, be sure to tell your dental provider if there are any changes in your medical history or medications since your last visit.)
- Does the dentist use a dental hygienist in the practice?
- Does the dental staff adequately explain techniques that will help you prevent dental health problems? Are your questions answered fully and to your satisfaction?
- Are special arrangements made for handling emergencies outside of office hours? (Most dentists make arrangements with a colleague or emergency referral service if they are unable to tend to emergencies.)
- Is information provided about fees and payment plans before treatment is scheduled?
- Verify the license of a prospective dentist and check his or her discipline history. You can do this by calling the Board of Dentistry at 971-673-3200 during the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday or by visiting our website www.oregon.gov/dentistry and selecting

the 'Licensee Look-up' link on the left side of our home page.

You and your dentist are partners in maintaining your oral health. Take time to ask questions and take notes if that will help you remember the dentist's or dental hygienist's advice or instructions.

Many dental offices offer to interact with your dental insurance company on your behalf in obtaining pre-authorization and verifying coverage. However, **it is always** the responsibility of the patient to know her or his benefit plan and to pay for dental services that have been provided that are in excess of the amount covered by insurance.



What should I expect when the dentist proposes treatment?

If the dentist makes recommendations for treatment, don't be afraid to ask for more information.

- Are other treatment options available? How do the options differ in cost? Which solutions will last the longest? Do all the options solve the problem?
- Among the dentist's recommendations, which treatments are absolutely necessary? Which are elective? Which are cosmetic? Which procedures are urgently needed and which ones are less urgent?
- Ask for a written treatment plan before you agree to treatment. Most treatment plans should suggest alternative treatment options. When extensive or major dental work is proposed, such as implants, crowns, or bridges, seeking a second or even a third opinion may be appropriate.
- How much will the proposed treatment cost? What method of payment does the dentist accept?

Check with your insurance company or managed care plan about the services covered and the amount it will reimburse for the treatment. Your dentist can submit a "Pretreatment Plan" for the insurer's review. The insurer will inform you of the costs that will be reimbursed under your particular plan.

If you need a specialist, ask your general dentist for a referral. Ask if the specialist is board certified or board eligible in the specialty.



Can I get my dental records from a dentist?

Board regulations require that a dentist provide **copies** of a patient's records, including x-rays, within 14 days of written request made by the patient or patient's guardian. (OAR 818-012-0030(8)).

The dentist may require payment in advance that is reasonably calculated to cover the costs of making the copies or duplicates. The dentist may charge a fee not to exceed \$30 for copying 10 or fewer pages of written material and no more than \$0.50 per page for pages 11 through 50 and no more than \$0.25 for each additional page plus any reasonable clerical costs incurred in the duplication of paper records. The dentist may charge the actual cost of duplicating x-rays. A dentist **may not** withhold these records because of any prior unpaid bills, except in the case of study models and radiographs if the study models and radiographs have not previously been paid for.



What can I do if I have a problem with my dentist?

First, talk to the doctor to see if you can mutually resolve the problem.

Many issues, not within the jurisdiction of the Board can be resolved through the Peer Review Committee of the local dental association. While Peer Review proceedings are not intended as purely dispute resolution services, professional review often can resolve some kinds of disputes between patients and dentists. The process is confidential and available provided the complaint falls within the peer review guidelines. For more information about this process and its guidelines, contact the Peer Review Director of the Oregon Dental Association at 1-800-452-5628 or visit the ODA web site at www.oregondental.org.

If you feel that the issue involves unacceptable patient care or other issues under the jurisdiction of the Board of Dentistry, you have the right to file a complaint with the Board. All complaints filed, that are within the Board's jurisdiction, are investigated. For more information about this process, see the section on [Filing a Complaint](#)."

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How long is a dentist required to keep patient records?

A dentist must maintain patient records and radiographs for at least seven years from the date of last entry unless:

- a. The patient requests the records, radiographs, and models be transferred to another dentist who shall maintain the records and radiographs;
- b. The dentist gives the records, radiographs, or models to the patient; or
- c. The dentist transfers the dentist's practice to another dentist who shall maintain the records and radiographs.

You should also check with your malpractice insurance carrier for their requirements.

It is suggested that a minor's patient records be kept for seven years AFTER the age of majority has been reached (age 25).

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Where can I find low-cost or free dental care?

Assistance programs vary. We recommend that you contact your local dental society to see if they know of any programs in your local area. The Oregon Dental Associations Website has a listing as well. You can visit their Community Access page by following this link. [ODA Community Access Page](#). There is also a clinic at the Oregon Health and Science University, School of Dentistry, located in Portland that provides reduced fee care (503-494-8867).

For those with exceptional need, you may consider contacting 'Exceptional Needs Dental Services'. Services are limited to client who are non-ambulatory or have a severe developmental disability or a mental impairment. Please call 800-644-1859 for further information or visit their website at www.endsor.com.

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What is the difference between a DDS and a DMD?

The DDS (Doctor of Dental Surgery) and DMD (Doctor of Dental Medicine) are the same degrees. The difference is a matter of semantics. The majority of dental schools award the DDS degree; however, some award a DMD degree. The education and degrees are the same.

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