

# How Do I Choose A Good Dentist?

*Finding the dentist who is right for you is key to establishing and preserving excellent oral health. It's a mistake to pick a practitioner out of the internet, yellow pages or choose one solely based on insurance coverage. The search for the right dentist might take some time and some effort. But the results of better health and progress toward the perfect smile makes it all worthwhile.*

The best way to find a good, reputable general dentist is by **referral from a friend or family member**. If you're seeking a specialist, try your family dentist for the best referral. But what if you don't have a regular dentist? Perhaps you've moved recently to a new neighbourhood, your prior practitioner has retired, or like many Australians, you've simply put off going to the dentist for so long that you realise you don't have a dentist.

Find a dentist that gives you a **thorough initial dental examination** includes inspection of the teeth, gums, tongue, lips, inside of the cheek, palate, and the skin of the face and neck, plus feeling the neck for abnormal lymph nodes and enlargement of the thyroid gland. In adults a periodontal probe should be inserted between the gums and teeth to detect abnormally large crevices. Good dentists also chart their findings in detail. Good dentists will spend the time with you.

**Be wary of free examinations**, it often means that they have to up sell treatment to recoup costs.

Good dentists advocate **regular check-ups** can detect problems early. Routine tooth cleanings, bite evaluations, periodontal examinations, early interventions, and fluoride treatments can often avoid costly and often painful repairs. The frequency of maintenance care (including calculus removal and x-ray examinations) should be based on an assessment of the frequency of cavity formation, the rate of calculus formation, the condition of the gums, and any other special problem. Once current treatment has been completed, you should be placed on a **recall schedule** and notified when the next checkup is due.

High-quality dental work usually lasts a very long time, whereas low-quality work may fall out or decay out in a few years. The price of dental work is not the best way to judge quality; rather, **pay attention to the time the dentist takes to do the work**. High-quality dentistry cannot be done assembly-line style; it takes time and meticulous attention to detail. High quality dental work is not free or heavily discounted dental work. **Be wary of insurance companies posing as dental centres**. An insurance company's core business is about managing their costs payout, premiums and risks, not health.

Before embarking on treatment, get a **clear understanding at your own level of what is to be done** and what the outcome might be. Consider treatment options, because there may be more than one way to accomplish a goal. For example, a removable bridge, fixed bridge, or an implant may all be acceptable ways to replace a missing tooth; but they have different advantages, disadvantages, and cost. **A good dentist will give you options and provide a written treatment plan**. A good dentist will also frequently attend **continuing professional education** to learn new techniques and to keep up to date on latest dental procedures. Ask them about their last course they attended and what that was for.

A good dental practice will invest in the **latest technology to benefit patients** e.g., CEREC 1 visit crowns, 3D X-rays.

Lastly a good dentist can put your fears at ease and is **empathetic**. For a good dentists it is about keeping you as a long term patient, building a strong relationship and trust with you and your family. You are not a number.

*We hope that this guide will help you choose a good dentist.*

