



Cristi Y. Cheek, D.M.D., P.C.

2872 Johnson Ferry Road
Suite 100
Marietta, Georgia 30062
(770) 993-3775

www.cheekdental.com

How to Find a “GOOD” Dentist

Finding a good dentist can be a daunting task when you’re moving to a new place or just looking for a change. Do you seek the opinions of neighbors and co-workers? Do you look online or in the phone book? How do you really know if a dentist is “good?” When one of my patients is moving to a new city, I have several recommendations for deciding on a new dentist.

One of the best resources for “word of mouth” recommendations is that of a periodontist, or gum specialist, who practices in the area. Periodontists deal with the health of the bone and gums and know which dentists are skilled at detecting periodontal disease early and also if those dentists do good quality restorative work. Co-workers and neighbors can be good resources for recommending a dentist based on the dentist’s personality, gentleness, and appearance of the office, but may not necessarily know if the work being done is of high quality.

Other things to consider are whether or not you are able to get an appointment within a reasonable period of time. Can you be appointed for a new patient examination within a few days or weeks, or is it a 2-month wait for the next available appointment? A long wait may indicate an office that would be too busy to see you quickly if an emergency ever arose. In cases of after hours emergencies, is the dentist available by phone to answer questions or concerns or even come to the office if necessary?

Many dentists will be glad to meet you just for a “get to know us” appointment if you desire before actually scheduling an examination. When you arrive, look at the cleanliness of the office. Are there “dust bunnies” in the corners, or is the office neat and tidy? A clean office is usually a more efficient one and often is particular about sterilization and disinfection. Does the front desk greet you as if they are glad you are there, or are they too busy talking to each other to notice you have arrived? A staff member should seat you in the treatment room close to your appointment time, or if an unusual circumstance has arisen, you should be told your approximate wait time. Once seated, your medical and dental history should be discussed with you, and you should be asked if you have any specific concerns or requests.

When you look around the office, does it seem “up-to-date” on technology? Digital x-rays, intraoral cameras, and computers in the operatories are some of the technologies that many updated offices have. When you receive your initial examination by the

Smile Specialists!

dentist, the exam should be thorough, checking not only for decay and broken or cracked teeth, but also for oral cancer or other facial pathology, occlusion (bite) issues and TMJ problems, and should include gum measurements to check for periodontal disease. The dentist and staff should be taking continuing education classes, not only to fulfill license requirements, but also to help them keep abreast of the latest advancements and techniques as well as honing their skills.

A “good” dentist is willing to tailor a treatment plan to your finances, recommending ideal treatment, but altering the scheduling of that treatment as much as possible to help you be able to afford it. Prices do not always reflect quality of treatment. High prices don’t necessarily correspond to high quality treatment, and I certainly do not recommend bargain shopping either when it comes to your health! Also, when comparing price alone on a specific treatment item, like a crown, you may find that one dentist’s price is less, but later discover that dentist “nickels and dimes” you for everything possible.

Having a feeling of trust and that the dentist is ethical is one of the most important factors in the dentist-patient relationship; after all, if the dentist is highly skilled, but cares nothing about you, is he or she really a “good” dentist? Also, being a member of the ADA (American Dental Association) and GDA (Georgia Dental Association) says that the dentist cares about the public and the dental profession and pays dues to help support the work those organizations do.

Finding a dentist you trust with your dental health can sometimes be a nerve wracking process. Seeking “word of mouth” recommendations combined with telephone or in-person interviews of the office can help you narrow your search to someone whom you will hopefully find to be that caring, ethical, gentle, knowledgeable professional you are looking for. However you choose to look, don’t procrastinate!