

Choosing A Dentist: Beyond Word-of-Mouth

When people start the process of choosing a dentist, they traditionally ask friends, neighbors and coworkers for recommendations.

Today there are strategies and information sources that help ensure the process, and the dentist selected, are more likely to meet the overall oral health needs of consumers.

According to Max Anderson, DDS, a national oral health advisor for Delta Dental Plans Association, “While a recommendation from a friend or neighbor can be quite valuable in choosing a dentist, it shouldn’t be the only source of information. With a little more effort, people can ensure that the oral health care providers they choose are the best for their own oral health, lifestyles and finances.”

The first step in choosing a dentist involves assessing your situation.

Are you looking for a dentist who can treat you, as well as every member of your family? This will probably lead you to look for a dentist with a general or family practice. Do you or your loved one have any special needs, such as a disability or strong fear of the dentist? You will want to note whether the dentists you are considering have the facilities, expertise and interest in treating patients with your special needs. How important is convenience and lifestyle in your decision? For many people, it’s important that dental appointments can be scheduled around work and personal schedules. Payment options and a dentist’s participation in a dental benefits network are also key considerations.

People with dental benefits through their employers have a head start in finding a dentist, especially if they’re covered by a dental carrier with a network of dentists. Dental carriers provide directories, available in booklets or online, arranged by location and fields of dental specialties to provide consumers with easy access to information.

For more information, you can also check with local and state dental societies, often listed in telephone directories under “Dentists” or “Associations,” to learn more about a specific dentist.

“People should not let lack of a familiar dentist keep them from getting regular care. There are many ways to match your needs and circumstances with the good, qualified dentists in your community,” says Dr. Anderson.