Tips for Back Pain Sufferers When Visiting the Dental Office

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Dental Care and Back Pain

As if back pain wasn't bad enough, a trip to the dentist can make it even worse. Even though it seems ridiculous, dentists and hygienists in most circumstances need to have their patients laid back to a certain point so that they can visually access certain parts of the mouth. Otherwise, the dentist or hygienist will have neck, shoulder and back pain of their own! If you're battling chronic back pain, there are a few steps that you and your dentist can take to minimize your discomfort during your trip to the dental office.

Ask Your Dentist About Using a Neck Pillow

Many dental offices offer ergonomic chairs, massage chairs, heating pads, blankets and even different types of back or neck pillows to accommodate the needs of the patient.

Some adjustments may be needed, but dentists and their teams understand that the flexibility and physical demand on some patients' backs mean they have restricted positions that they can sit in during their dental appointments.

If they don't, feel free to bring something with you. The only problem that you might run into is if a neck pillow is so large that it causes your head to tilt forward, it will restrict the dentist's line of sight. Please refrain from this if at all possible as it will affect your quality of care.

While it may make you more comfortable, it may make it almost impossible for your dentist to perform the treatment without damaging the back.

You might not know it, but dental professionals have some of the highest related work injuries associated with back, shoulder, neck and wrist pain of any other type of profession! If they've been in the field for a decade or more, they will probably relate to you more than you might think.

Preferred Positions

If you know some types of positions that you are or are not able to sit in, let your dentist know before you make the appointment.

That way if the team needs to make tweaks regarding the length of appointment or time of day, they can (more physically demanding treatments on the dentist or dental team will need to be scheduled first thing in the morning).

Some patients can lie farther back if they're on their side or if their feet are elevated. Experiment with different positions, making slow, gradual movements to see what works best.

In most cases, slowly moving the dental chair back in short increments will allow you to get back into the position that the dentist needs you to be in, rather than trying to do it all at once.

Be sure to take any medication regularly, without skipping a dose the morning of your dental appointment. If a pain medication or muscle relaxant is needed, then ask your primary care provider or dentist for a prescription to take beforehand.

Let your dentist know what works best for you and if you feel great in a particular position, tell them! Most of the dental team will be very cautious and concerned about whether they are pushing you too hard or not. If you find that things are going well, let your dental team know that fact so they can best accommodate you in the future.