



word of mouth®

The Massachusetts Dental Society (MDS) is pleased to make this publication available to our member dentists as a way of communicating important oral health information to their patients.

Information in WORD OF MOUTH articles comes from dental health care professionals of the MDS and other leading professional dental organizations, including the American Dental Association. If you have any questions about specific content that may affect your oral health, please contact your dentist. For timely news regarding oral health, visit the "For the Public" section of the MDS Web site at www.massdental.org.

Your comments and suggestions regarding WORD OF MOUTH are always welcome. All correspondence and requests for additional copies may be forwarded to Melissa Carman, Managing Editor, c/o Massachusetts Dental Society, Two Willow Street, Suite 200, Southborough, MA 01745-1027, or email mcarman@massdental.org.

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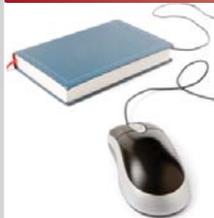
got dentist?

We know that many of you already have a dentist whom you visit twice a year for regular dental checkups and treatment. But surprisingly enough, nearly half of all Americans (46 percent) do not have a general dentist, according to the Academy of General Dentistry. And for those of you who move to a new city or town, or whose dentist retires, finding a new dentist can be a difficult task, especially if you are living in a community where you don't know many people. Asking for referrals is a good place to start, but ultimately you will have to decide which dentist is best suited to your individual needs and situation. A variety of factors can come into play when choosing a dentist, ranging from the office's location to the practice's hours to the level of care you require to the languages spoken to whether the practice is accepting new patients.

There are many ways you can find a dentist. The Massachusetts Dental Society (MDS) and the American Dental Association (ADA) offer these suggestions to get you started:

- Ask family, friends, neighbors, or coworkers for recommendations.
- Ask your primary care physician, other health care providers, or your local pharmacist.
- If you're moving to another town, ask your current dentist to make a recommendation.
- Use the MDS's Find a Dentist Web site (www.massdental.org/find-a-dentist) to search for dentists in Massachusetts or the ADA Member Directory (www.ada.org) to search for dentists out of state based on a variety of criteria.

FIND AN MDS DENTIST



To find an **MDS dentist**, contact the Massachusetts Dental Society at **(800) 342-8747** or visit www.massdental.org/find-a-dentist.



Consider this . . .

You may have specific considerations when choosing a dentist; these criteria should reflect your own needs and priorities. The following questions can help you define what is most important for you:

1. Where is the practice located? Will it be easy for you to get there? Is it accessible by public transportation? Is there ample parking? Is it handicapped accessible (e.g., elevators, ramps)?
2. Which dental procedures are completed in-office and which procedures will be referred out?
3. How long will you wait for an appointment after you call?
4. Does the office keep open appointment times for emergencies?
5. What are the covering arrangements when your dentist is unavailable or on vacation? Whom should you call if you have a problem after-hours? If the dentist works in a group practice, are you comfortable with being seen by one of the practice associates?
6. Is the office staff friendly and courteous?
7. If you call with a question about your care, does a dentist or dental assistant return your call promptly?
8. Does the dentist speak your language fluently, or would he/she require an interpreter or other translation services?
9. What is the educational background of the dentist, and is he/she board certified in a specialty?
10. Does the dentist accept your dental benefit plan? Does the office process insurance claims, or will you be required to pay up front for services and file the claims yourself?

After you've gathered your research,

you'll want to evaluate your options and consider what the most important attributes are for you. Once you have selected the dentist who meets your needs, set up an appointment for a general exam, which consists of a cleaning, X-rays, and medical health history, to see if the dentist meets your expectations. This visit is your opportunity to give the dentist a test run. Bring any questions you have regarding the dental practice and your treatment, and don't be afraid to ask them.

One other thing you'll want to know is if the dentist you decide on is a member of both the MDS and the ADA (MDS members are required to be members of the ADA). The MDS and ADA help members stay current with the latest information affecting dentistry and clinical information to provide the best possible patient care. Additionally, MDS/ADA members voluntarily agree to adhere to high ethical standards of conduct, as described in the ADA Principles of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct.

You may want to call or visit more than one dentist before making your decision. Dental care is a very personalized service that requires a good relationship between the dentist and the patient, so you'll want to make sure you find the best fit for you. 