

Here's What You Should Know About Choosing An Online Dentist.

In today's economy, where hard-earned dollars must be spent wisely, it's crucial to be aware of which doctors can be trusted to provide a suitable service. Currently, more dentists are looking towards the Web in search of new patients. How many of those dentists really have your best interest in mind? Does being at the top of the search results make for the best find?

The wonderful thing about utilizing the Internet to find a dentist is the ability to view a practice through their Web site. A dental Web site should be a direct reflection of the actual office. Many dentists fail to keep up with modern times on the Web. Sites can become quickly outdated resulting in an unjust representation of what the practice has to offer. Therefore, a good practice will lose its ability to obtain additional patients. On the other hand, an appealing Web site will spark an interest and should provoke further inquiry. Some things to consider when entering a dental Web site are functional navigation links, photo gallery, secured sites where needed, doctor bio and credentials, at the minimum. Remember, when a doctor goes above and beyond to secure his or her practice on the Web, they take great pride in the way it looks and functions.

Follow these simple guidelines when choosing the right online dentist:

Dental Credentials and organizations are important considerations when choosing the right dentist. This implies active participation and promotion of good standards, as well as compliance within the dentistry field. Those who have taken their practice to the next level of excellence ensure their patients' satisfaction and reassurance.

Web Site Reputation gives credibility to their online history. It is common knowledge to look for the BBB (Better Business Bureau) logo when seeking a reputable service. However, there are other avenues to validate credentials through secured third-party verification. It's the dentist's responsibility to present viewers with this valuable information. Patients should also have the opportunity to provide feedback regarding their dental visit. This conveys a message that doctors hold their patients' opinions in the highest regard.

User Friendly Web Sites make for a quick decision when it comes to dental consideration. When a site has navigation links that do not function correctly, such as their office history, directions, payment options, contact us, dental services', it leaves no room to make an influential decision. Dental Web sites should always operate accurately and the dentist should run his or her Web site just as they would their office.

Photo Gallery provides a bird's eye view of what you'll see on your visit. Back in the mid 1960's through the 1970's Monty Hall had "Let's make a deal." A game show where contestants played for cash and prizes. More often than naught contestants would choose prizes behind curtains they were clueless about. If you come across a Web site that doesn't supply a photo gallery, what are you really getting when you show up? You're basically leaving yourself to take what's behind curtain number three. Online dental practices looking to win over new patients should be on the cutting edge and allow viewers a behind the scenes look at their office.

Doctor Bio is yet another crucial piece to the puzzle for credibility. Studies have shown people connect with kindred spirits. The option to read about a doctor's values says everything about who they are and what they're about. This understanding helps to break down the wall often associated with the patient-doctor inferiority complex. Doctors who are forth right with hobbies, family and their faith have a tendency of being more trust worthy and giving.

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) was established by the U.S. Congress in 1996 and encompasses everything from health practices, privacy, fraud, abuse and much more. Many dental Web sites allow for privileged information to be sent electronically, specifically new patient forms. This may leave their patient's privacy at risk. It may also be an immediate violation of HIPAA regulations and compliances. Here's how to determine if the doctor you're considering to trust keeps their patients privacy in mind. Secured sites will always have an "s" that follows the http. For example, <https://www.dentalABC.com> is secured. Alternatively, <http://www.dentalABC.com> is not secured. If you're looking for a dentist and you find yourself on their Web site, glance to see if they have a client log-in page. If yes, then find the secured site for confirmation.

Once you have found two to four Web sites you are ready to consider, here are some other things to ponder before making your final choice:

- **Cost:** Does the dentist accept your insurance? Does the dentist offer multiple payment options such as credit cards, personal checks, payment plans or financial assistance? If the insurance plan requires referrals to specialists, can this dentist provide them? Also, be aware that costs vary by practice. If you can, get estimates of what that dentist might charge for common procedures such as fillings, crowns or root canal therapy. Even if you have dental insurance, you may be paying part of the costs yourself. Most dental staff is trained to not give you estimates and price quotes over the phone. These reasons, of course, are for good grounds. However, knowing what they charge for initial consultations shouldn't be kept a secret. It's also a great idea to ask about specials, as well as paid-in-full discounts.

- **Location:** Driving convenience shouldn't be the first consideration when you choose your dentist. On the other hand, if you feel comfortable you've done your online research, having a dentist close to home or work makes it easier to schedule visits and to arrive on time.

- **Personal comfort:** One of the most significant things to consider is whether you feel comfortable with that doctor and their staff. Are you able to explain symptoms and ask questions? Do you feel like the dentist hears and understands your concerns? Would you feel comfortable asking for pain medicine, expressing your fear or anxiety, or asking questions about a procedure?

- **Friendliness:** Are you greeted on the phone with their name and do they sound like they care? This is huge because it shows the type of care and commitment you can expect to rely on. It also says the doctor cares enough to make sure his or her staff is

trained to assist your needs. You pay them for what they provide, and therefore you should feel assured you will get what you pay for.

- **Emergency care:** Find out what happens if you have an emergency, either during normal office hours, or at night or on a weekend. A dentist should not refer you to a hospital emergency room. You should be able to contact your dentist (or a suitable substitute) at any time by calling an answering service, cell phone or pager.

Even in these current economically times, protecting your hard earned dollars means simply understanding what you're looking for. With the right knowledge it can save you from having to find the right dentist at the expense of losing money. The next time you go searching to find the right online dentist for you and/or your family, use the common sense approaches listed above. Remember, a savvy consumer is a happier patient!

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