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Information About Medical Histories For Patients



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Information About Medical Histories For Patients



Why does my dentist want to know about my medical history?

Your dentist wishes to provide the best possible treatment, as safely as possible. Most dental treatment is quite uneventful. However, sometimes a health condition can influence the way dental care needs to be provided and requires your dentist to make certain changes to help avoid potential problems. For example:

- If dental procedures are planned that may involve bleeding, your dentist wants to know that the blood will clot normally. Blood clotting can be affected by many conditions, such as liver disease. Medications, including aspirin and even some herbal preparations, can also interfere with normal blood clotting.
- Your dentist relies on a healthy immune system to help fight infections. Some conditions like diabetes, and some medications like steroids, reduce the effectiveness of the immune system.
- Many patients need to take preventive antibiotics before certain dental procedures are performed. For example, patients with an artificial heart valve may need to take an antibiotic prior to certain treatments to help prevent a serious infection from occurring.

It is very important for your dentist to understand as much as possible about your past and current health condition. This means that it is very important for your dentist to take an initial complete medical history and to keep it up-to-date by checking with you on a regular basis.

**Medical History Recordkeeping Guide
and Patient Information Pamphlet** [▶](#)

Why does my dentist want to call my physician or pharmacist?

Sometimes, your dentist may wish to speak with a family physician or medical specialist to obtain additional information about a health condition before initiating care. For example, a patient may reveal the existence of heart and/or blood pressure problems, but be unsure regarding their full nature. Ideally, the dentist will consult with the patient's physician to clarify the patient's health status, which will help determine if there are any risks to delivering dental care and whether any precautions should be taken.

If your dentist needs to consult with your physician or another health-care provider, this will be discussed with you first.

Why does my dentist want to take my blood pressure?

In addition to obtaining a complete medical history, your dentist may wish to supplement this information by taking and recording vital signs, such as your heart rate and blood pressure. The decision may be prompted by the presence of a health condition, such as high blood pressure or cardiovascular disease, or to establish baseline vital signs prior to providing some dental services, such as the administration of any form of sedation or general anaesthesia.

When I attended the dental office, they presented me with a medical history form with so many questions. If I don't want to answer any questions about my medical history, can my dentist still treat me?

No. In order to allow for the provision of safe dental care, your dentist must ensure that all necessary and relevant medical information is obtained prior to initiating treatment. You and your dentist are partners, working together to achieve the best possible dental care. It is important to carefully and thoroughly answer all questions on the medical history questionnaire. Each question is there for a reason. If you do not understand why a question is being asked, or you are not sure about the answer to any question, just ask your dentist. All of the information on your medical history questionnaire is kept strictly private, and is protected by doctor-patient confidentiality. It will not be shared with anyone outside your dentist's office without your permission.

Why does my dentist need to know about the medications, non-prescription drugs or herbal supplements that I take?

This information will allow your dentist to identify certain underlying medical conditions and possibly the type or severity of these conditions. Your dentist may also determine possible drug interactions, intra-oral or systemic side effects and/or immunosuppression. Your dentist may also identify potential problems from the use of non-prescription drugs, such as an increased bleeding time with the use of Aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) or some herbal supplements.

The medical questionnaire included questions about my drinking and smoking habits, as well as questions about my recreational drug usage. Are these questions appropriate? How relevant can they be to a dentist?

Information about a patient's social history and habits can help a dentist assess the patient's risk of several diseases, both systemic and oral, and may influence the development of the dental treatment plan.

For example, smoking can put you at risk for (smoking-related) complications such as cardiovascular disease, lung disease, oral cancer, gum disease and impaired healing. With this knowledge your dentist will be aware and vigilant for these conditions and identify if you will benefit from smoking cessation programs that can be offered.

Also, drinking alcoholic beverages on a regular basis may put you at risk for developing some degree of liver dysfunction, which in turn can cause bleeding problems that could affect the outcome of surgical procedures, such as dental extractions. If you have some liver dysfunction, your dentist may also need to avoid prescribing certain drugs that are metabolized primarily in your liver.

Some recreational drugs such as cocaine or amphetamines, especially if used within 24 hours, can cause significant cardiac dysrhythmias, which may be exacerbated by certain ingredients (i.e. vasoconstrictors) contained in local anesthetics. In such cases, the dentist may need to modify your treatment plan in order to ensure safe delivery of your dental care.