



- Practice** Manage Your Career »
- Learn** Expand Your Knowledge »
- Live** Balance Your Life »

- Calculators**
- Debt Load
 - Loan Payment
 - Loan Term
 - Overhead

How to Cultivate Loyal Dental Patients

Taking the time to get to know your patients on a personal level — and letting them get to know you — goes a long way when it comes to patient retention. Let's face it, most people don't like going to the dentist. If your chair-side manner is impeccable and your dental team is friendly, your patients may actually look forward coming to your office, which means fewer canceled appointments and good reviews on social networking sites.

7 ways to improve dentist-patient communication

1. Don't do all the talking — Ask your patients how they are, if they're having any problems and listen carefully to what they say.
2. Begin with an outline — Start your discussion with the big picture and work your way into more detail, asking your patient if they have any questions along the way.
3. Appeal to the patient's values and priorities — If your patient mentions a preference for treatment, such as a long-term solution or a quicker, lower-cost solution, mention that in your discussion. For example, you might say, "You mentioned you preferred a long-term solution. That's why I'm recommending a gold crown. It's more durable than the other choices." While reflecting their preference, do not ignore explaining other options. Dentists should *disclose all options available* to a patient in order to allow the patient to make an informed decision regarding treatment.
4. Don't refer to teeth by number — Referring to teeth by number is a big no-no in dentist-patient etiquette. Call teeth by their names and reference their location: "The very back molar on your right side."
5. Don't tell patients what you would "like" to do — Be direct when explaining your treatment plan. "The ideal treatment is ..." or "The treatment I would recommend for my own family ..." is much better than saying, "What I'd like to do ..."
6. Use patient examples — Personalize your recommendation by referring to other patients who've had similar treatments. Do be mindful not to disclose *identifying information* when using their case as an illustration.
7. Mention the benefits — Describe the positive aspects of your suggested treatment plan: "By taking care of your gums, you'll have a good chance at saving those two back teeth."

6 ways to impress your patients

1. Give the patient more than they expect — Work with your dental team to ensure that all communication with your patient is respectful and that every interaction is prompt and thorough.
2. Let the patient know if you're running late — If you're running behind, most patients will be impressed if you take a few seconds to poke your head into the waiting room and let them know when they can be expected to be called.
3. Stay informed so you know what oral health issues or treatments are popular — Keep up-to-date on the treatments that are being talked about in the media. Your patients may ask you about a treatment they read about or heard on television. The *Science in the News* section of the ADA website is a good place to start.
4. Read the local papers to find items relating to your patients — Are your patients experiencing big events in their lives like marriages, births, deaths and notable anniversaries? These kinds of events are usually documented in the local newspaper. It would be a nice gesture on your part to send out cards to patients who have recently had a major event in their lives.
5. Provide children with a treat after (or before) treatment — Children are usually encouraged by the "treat" they will receive at the end of their appointment, such as a sticker, pencil or other item, but stick to inexpensive items to *avoid anti-kickback statutes*. If the procedure is particularly difficult, you may even consider letting them pick out a small stuffed animal to keep them company while they are in the dental chair.
6. Make short follow-up calls to your patients after a difficult procedure — When you call a patient at home after an invasive procedure, you'll be seen as a caring doctor and they may be more likely to refer you to family and friends based on your one-minute phone call to see how they're doing.

You may also like:

- [Attracting New Patients to Your Dental Practice](#)
- [How to Stop Educating Your Patients Out Your Door](#)
- [How You Communicate Could Cost You](#)

Tags: | [Marketing](#) | [Practice Growth](#) | [Starting Practice](#) |

« Marketing categories
If you need additional information: [Ask the ADA](#)

ADVERTISEMENT

Save money when you travel. Visit [ADA.org/travel](#)

ADVERTISEMENT

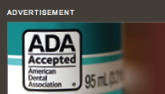
Today's ADA Member Dentist

Challenge: Wants to protect her family and her career; insists on getting a great value

Solution: Insurance Protection at low, group rates from ADA Members Insurance Plans

See why ADA members trust us. [Insurance.ada.org](#)

ADA Members Insurance Plans



Tell your patients to look for oral care products with the **ADA Seal of Acceptance**

- Practice
- Dental Benefits
 - Facilities
 - Medicare
 - Operations
 - Ownership Life Cycle
 - Patients
 - Professional Pathways
 - Staff

- Learn
- In-Person Educational Opportunities
 - Online Educational Opportunities

- Live
- Community
 - Wellness
 - Work-Life Balance

- About
- Take a Tour
 - About Us
 - Frequently Asked Questions
 - Member Directory
 - Advertise
 - Media Inquiries
 - Contact Us

- ADA Sites
- ADA.org
 - ADA 2014
 - ADA Catalog
 - JADA
 - Center for Evidence-Based Dentistry
 - ADA Business Resources

- Tools
- My Favorites
 - Tag Cloud
 - Long-Term Care Course
 - Apps
 - Calculators
 - Professional Links



Practice
Manage Your Career »

Learn
Expand Your Knowledge »

Live
Balance Your Life »

- Calculators**
- Debt Load
 - Loan Payment
 - Loan Term
 - Overhead

General Guidelines for Referring Dental Patients

On any given day in a dental practice, a patient referral to another dentist or specialist is common. In fact, referrals are an integral part of complete quality health care management. Dentists are expected to **recognize** when referrals are needed and act accordingly.

When a dentist refers a patient, both dentists should be in communication regarding current or future care needs. Any dental professional to whom a patient is referred for treatment by another dentist should have a clear understanding of the role they play and report back to the original dentist throughout the treatment plan. Provision of emergency care during the referral period should be discussed between the dentists and the patient.

Possible Referral Situations or Conditions

The reason for a referral varies with each patient. Some of these reasons include, but are not limited to:

- Level of training and experience of the dentist
- Dentist's areas of interest
- Extensiveness of the problem
- Complexity of the treatment
- Medical complications
- Patient load
- Availability of special equipment and instruments
- Staff capabilities and training
- Patient desires
- Behavioral concerns
- Desire to share responsibility for patient care
- Geographic proximity of the referred dentist or specialist

Communication between professionals is essential. Patients should receive clear, consistent information about their dental problems and treatment from all dental professionals. Mixed messages can confuse and frustrate patients.

Following the steps below may ease the communication process:

- Initial report from the referring dentist to the specialist or consulting dentist — This report should state the reason for the referral and include any information that will help the recipient be prepared and informed when they meet the patient. In some cases this communication may be mandatory according to state law. Patient consent may also be necessary. The referring dentist is obligated to be informed of his or her state's dental practice act requirements.
- Follow-up report from the specialist or consulting dentist to the referring dentist — This report should include the preliminary diagnosis and anticipated treatment after the first consultation with the referred patient.
- Progress reports, as necessary — If treatment is extended over a considerable period of time, occasional progress reports sent back to the referring dentist are helpful.
- Final report — This report, issued by the referred dentist, should communicate any issues that may alter the future course of therapy or affect the relationship between the original referring dentist and his or her patient.

After the treatment plan is complete, the referred dentist should send diagnostic quality copies or duplicates of radiographic or digital images taken by his or her office back to the referring dentist, as well as any other pertinent documents or forms originally provided.

The above is an excerpt from 'General Guidelines for Referring Patients,' which was developed by the ADA Council on Dental Practice with input from many dental-related organizations and should not be interpreted as policy of the ADA or any of its other agencies.

Tags: | [Efficient Systems](#) | [Patient Wellness](#) | [Practice](#) |

« Patient Wellness categories
If you need additional information: [Ask the ADA](#)

ADVERTISEMENT

Tested. Trusted.
Search ADA Seal Products now!

ADVERTISEMENT

Promote Your Practice on ADA's MouthHealthy.org ADA* Find-a-Dentist™

The ADA Find-a-Dentist page on MouthHealthy.org displays an enhanced view of your credentials, contacts and even social media information. Keep your member profile up to date.

Update Your Profile Now!

ADVERTISEMENT

Tell your patients to look for oral care products with the **ADA Seal of Acceptance**

<p>Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dental Benefits Facilities Medicare Operations Ownership Life Cycle Patients Professional Pathways Staff 	<p>Learn</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-Person Educational Opportunities Online Educational Opportunities 	<p>Live</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Wellness Work-Life Balance 	<p>About</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take a Tour About Us Frequently Asked Questions Member Directory Advertise Media Inquiries Contact Us 	<p>ADA Sites</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ADA.org ADA 2014 ADA Catalog JADA Center for Evidence-Based Dentistry ADA Business Resources MouthHealthy Professional Product Review New Dentist Now Blog 	<p>Tools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> My Favorites Tag Cloud Long-Term Care Course Apps Calculators Professional Links
--	---	--	---	--	---

Copyright © 2014 American Dental Association. Reproduction or republication strictly prohibited without prior written permission. Terms of Use | Privacy Policy | Contact Us