

8 Good
Qualities
to Look For in a

GREAT DENTIST



Dr. Anthony Do

Dentistry was different when I was a kid.

To begin with, I'll admit that my childhood visits to my family dentist was something I never fully enjoyed. It was old school. Everything from the burning tooth smell, to the ratchety old equipment, to the crazy ceiling cat posters. It all made for a less-than stellar experience. And as a kid, I wanted to be playing video games instead.

But crazy enough, it was actually my family dentist that kept me from running out the door. He was the permanent fixture in the office that I enjoyed getting reacquainted with twice a year. He would always ask what I was up to, check my teeth, and then have me on my way. And strangely enough, that quick interaction was all I needed to feel happy about visiting my dentist. My visits were frequent enough that I eventually viewed them like going to see my aunts and uncles. He was family and I knew he had my best intentions at heart.

Fast forward to today and now I'm a dentist. And sadly they way I've seen it, things aren't what they used to be. Dentistry has transitioned more towards managed care with a corporate philosophy where the objective is less about patient-centered care but more about profit-centered care. And unfortunately with this model, I've seen too many people hurt.

This guide was written with the best intentions to help guide you in finding your lifelong family dentist. It will identify what positive aspects in a dentist I would search for myself and it will acknowledge certain red flags that I know you should watch out for. Be careful not use this and nit pick your well-meaning dentist. Or use it to justify in your head why you don't go to the dentist "because it's all one big scam." In all honesty, most of us do want what's best for you.

Use it because you want to find that lifelong honest dentist. And use it because that honest dentist, likewise, is looking for that lifelong patient like yourself.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anthony Do". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "A" and a stylized "D".

Dr. Anthony Do

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#1

**A GOOD
DENTIST WILL
LISTEN TO YOU.**

It's not about the dentist. It's about you.

The right family dentist will actually listen to your concerns and will address what you came in for. More importantly, he'll address your dental problem in the context of you. Do you suffer from anxiety? Do you have a busy family/work schedule? Do you have limited financial resources? A plan that not only addresses your tooth problem but addresses you as a person would be the most ideal.



What To Look Out For

The Sales Pitch - did you come in because of a simple sensitive tooth but instead got a sales pitch suggesting something else? Like how fabulous you'll look with whitening and veneers? Buzz! Red flag. You came in to find a dentist, not a car salesman.

#2

**A GOOD
DENTIST WILL
EDUCATE YOU
ABOUT YOUR
DENTAL HEALTH.**

It's always good to leave the dentist's office knowing more about your smile.

Your dentist should be able to explain in simple terms what is going on inside your mouth. Any concerns are conveyed in a meaningful way and tips are always suggested for improvement. Condescending and lecturing tones do not need to be a part of the routine.

If dental treatment is recommended, a caring dentist will explain to you why it's suggested, what the procedure is all about, and give pointers to avoid any similar problems from arising again.



Things To Look Out For

The Mystery Treatment Plan - your dentist came in, did a 2 minute check and walked out. You're now face-to-face with the front desk person who says, "You need 4 crowns and 6 fillings." You lose your breath and think, "Wait. No one explained to me that I need all this stuff." If someone is going to make a plan for you, it's only right that they would include you as well. Always ask questions and don't be afraid to seek a second opinion.

#3

**A GOOD
DENTIST WILL
UNDERSTAND
YOUR PAIN.**

Your dentist is a winner if he can truly understand your pain, both physically and emotionally.



Shots are dreaded by everyone. A dentist using pre-numbing gel and a good hand can make any shot feel less painful or even pain free.



Having dental anxiety does not make you a baby. It's either rooted in a natural response or linked to a traumatic childhood dental experience. A good dentist will manage your anxiety and accept you for who you are. How romantic!



Does the office make you feel comfortable? Does it feel like a high volume clinic? If it's your family dentist, it should feel like a calm place you'd want your family to be in. Kind of like home.

Things To Look Out For

The Painful Visit - believe it or not, dental procedures should be painless. Unless it's a huge infection, a little pressure or tinge of sensitivity is sometimes normal, but never face-cringing pain. If you're feeling pain during a procedure, let your dentist know. You might be a challenge to numb. A good dentist will have a few tricks up his sleeve and take the proper time to get you comfortably desensitized.

#4

**A GOOD
DENTIST WILL
SAVE YOU
MONEY.**

You want your dentist to be interested in your dental well-being. Not your wallet.



Dental insurance companies love to play tricks, but a nice dentist will try to work with them to reduce your out-of-pocket expenses.



Not many can afford all their dentistry at once. An office that offers a variety of payment plans is one that cares about helping you get what you need.



There's something to be said about a dentist that warrants his services. It says he's confident that his work will stand the test of time and that he's got you covered against that sneaky popcorn kernel.

Things To Look Out For

The “Upgrade Fee” - your in-network dentist just gave you a treatment plan that shows an “upgrade fee.” Caution. Dentists are bound by the contracts they signed with the insurance companies to only charge a contracted rate for specific procedures. The most common upcharge is the “white crown,” “Lava crown,” or “Valplast denture” upgrade fee. Exceptions may exist to this rule so contact your insurance company to be sure.

The Deep Cleaning - you've gotten a \$1,000+ treatment plan for the deep cleaning of your gums with 10+ sites of injectable antibiotics into your gum pocket. In the dental field, this procedure is known to be the most “liberally” prescribed procedure. If you haven't been educated enough about its need, then it's worth it for a second opinion.

#5

**A GOOD
DENTIST WILL
ALWAYS BE
THERE FOR YOU.**

A dentist practicing true “family dentistry” will always be there for his patients like they’re his family.



It’s a plus if your dentist tries to accommodate your schedule by keeping hours to fit your busy life schedule. Namely before and/or after work.



A responsible office will always have an after hours phone number. Nothing is worse than having dental treatment done, feel a complication, and have no one to call.



A dentist that calls to check up on you after you just had treatment done is a keeper. He’s truly concerned about you and is reminding you that he’s available if you need anything.

Things To Look Out For

The “Doc in a Box” Dentist - it used to be that the dentist owning the practice was the one who took care of you. Nowadays, things have gone all crazy Walmart style. Companies are rapidly infiltrating dentistry and transforming dental care from patient-centered to profit-centered care. And as such, the dentist who takes care of you is treated merely as an employee. Ask the dentist if he owns the practice. Beware of multiple location practices. And beware of practice names containing the words “Dental Group” or “and Associates”. You may find yourself one day staring at a different dentist at each visit or worse, having your continuity of care disrupted because your initial dentist is now gone.

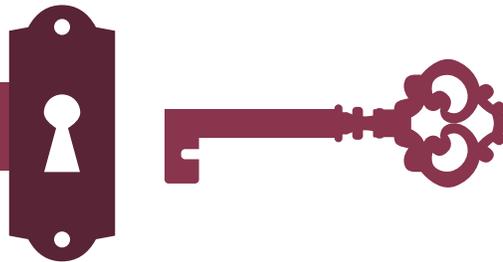
#6

**A GOOD
DENTIST IS
CONSERVATIVE.**

A conservative dental approach is key

A sign of a good dentist is one that practices a conservative approach.

Not every tooth that has a small crack needs a crown, not every crooked tooth needs a veneer, and in some surprising cases, not all cavities need to be filled. An open dialogue between you and your dentist is key to understanding what is best for you.



Things To Look Out For

The \$10,000 Treatment Plan - sure you haven't seen a dentist in a while, but do you really NEED \$10,000 worth of dental work? If the dentist hasn't made you confident in his plan, a second opinion is often a good idea. No dentist should fear you seeking out a second opinion. If the treatment plan is sound, especially one that is expensive, it should hold up to scrutiny by others.

The Urgency Sell - so you need a lot of dental work and you've been scared by the dentist and the staff into thinking it must be done now. Is it time to mortgage your house? No. A conservative dentist will prioritize a plan to address the big things first and give you an honest opinion of what can be strategically delayed. That way you can make the proper financial arrangements for you and your family. And if you've been made to feel bad because you can't afford all your dentistry at once, it's time to switch dentists.

#7

**A GOOD
DENTIST TAKES
THE TIME TO DO
GOOD WORK.**

Mother Nature did a good job making your smile a precious piece of art. And when restoring beautiful art, it takes time to recreate it.



Your dentist should love what he does. Because why else would he want to take the time to do good work.



Using eye magnifiers is critical. It helps your dentist see things that the naked eye can't see. And when dealing with millimeters, it's critical.



Form follows function. Your teeth are shaped the way they are for a reason. And if your filling or crown does not closely resemble that, you'll notice it.

Things To Look Out For

The rollerskating dentist - during a long procedure, your dentist might give both you and himself a break and step out. But if you're noticing that he's constantly stepping out the room, it might be an indicator of poor time management. He might be double booked and is trying to see many patients at one time. In which case, you don't want his attention divided, especially during your procedure.

The rough and bulky filling - it takes hard work and time to make 1/10 of a millimeter feel good to the tongue. If your filling or crown doesn't feel smooth and rounded, let your dentist know. It may not be absolutely perfect, but he should take the time to make it look good and feel good as much as possible.

#8

**A GOOD
DENTIST WILL
HAVE GOOD
ONLINE REVIEWS.**

A good dentist will have good authentic online reviews.

Nothing is more reliable than a personal referral, but the next best thing is an online review. Online reviews give insight into other people's experience, whether good or bad. The best reviews are the one's that actually convey a personal account of an experience. And trust the big names like Google, Yelp, Yellow Pages, etc.



Things To Look Out For

Bad Reviews - dentists and their staff are all human and make mistakes. But look out for common complaints that seem to hint at a trend. Dentists that leave bad reviews unanswered are either unaware or just simply complacent. Qualities you might want to factor into your consideration.

Generic Posts - "They're awesome!" "Best office ever!" Generic posts like these don't really say much and don't give you much insight towards the office. In fact, studies have shown that these types of reviews are more than likely placed with less than honest intentions.

Online Reputation Sites - some dentists pay companies to host "review sites." These will always show 5 stars because the dentist is able to filter out bad reviews. And although it allows the dentist to put his best foot forward, take these reviews with a grain of salt. Such sites are Demand Force, Patient Connect 365, and Smile Reminder.



DR. ANTHONY DO

Dr. Anthony Do is a practicing general dentist. He owns and operates Red Oak Family Dentistry in McKinney, Texas. His passion in dentistry simply comes from treating people the right way, just the way you would treat your own family members. He also continually supports the Samaritan Inn, a homeless rehabilitation program, located in McKinney where he proudly provides free dental work to its residents. He can be contacted at info@redoakfamilydentistry.com or clicking the button below.

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