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## Health

**BY ANNA SANDERS**  
Special to amNewYork

# Tooth-scary: Helping kids overcome dental fear



A visit to the dentist can be scary for a young child.

Most early memories of the dentist are tinged with fear, pain and novocaine, so it comes as no surprise that as many as 20% of Americans avoid going except when it's an emergency.

Dealing with the fear early on is instrumental because it establishes good practices from a young age. And because February is National Children's Dental Health Month, there's no better time to address kids' dental terror.

"For kids, the greatest fear . . . is the fear of the unknown," said Dr. Steven Goldberg, a dentist and graduate of New York University's College of Dentistry. "As adults we kind of lie back and accept what's being done, but children want to know what's going on."

Goldberg said one way parents can dispel fears is by not sharing their own bad experiences — especially when it comes to pain. And while parents might have had traumatic teeth-cleanings in the past, today's advanced numbing techniques, like Goldberg's own DentalVibe, make visits relatively painless.

"There aren't screaming

people in the chair anymore," Goldberg said.

When Beth Schachinger, of Malverne, N.Y., was a kid, a dentist said her "tiny cavity" didn't call for any novocaine.

"We'll just drill it," she recalled him saying.

"That was it — I got such a shock of pain that ever since I was terrified," said Schachinger, 40. "It'd be so bad that I would have nightmares about going. I'd make the appointment, change the appointment and it kept going and I would have dental issues."

Schachinger's current dentist is more sensitive, she said, and Goldberg explained more dentists take pains to avoid similar experiences, es-

pecially for impressionable children.

Trips to the dentist should begin when a child's first tooth appears, said Goldberg, and adults should visit twice a year to promote overall health. Good dental hygiene decreases risk of infection and other ailments, Goldberg said.

In fact, people who had their teeth cleaned twice or more over a two-year period had a 24% lower risk of heart disease and 13% lower risk of stroke, according to a 2011 report by the American Heart Association.

"A lot of people don't understand that their mouth is connected to the rest of their body — they're all the same system," said Goldberg.

## Tips to alleviate kids' fear of the dentist

- Explain to your child what to expect.
- Read them a children's book about the dentist before their visit.
- Talk to them about your own positive experiences.
- Bring them for a visit to the dentist before your scheduled appointment.
- Call your dentist so you can fill out forms beforehand.
- Explain how portrayals of the dentist on TV and in movies aren't the reality.
- Start bringing your child to the dentist when their first tooth comes in.
- Brush your child's teeth with a mechanical toothbrush yourself.

## Etiquette: Minding your manners at the gym

Some people think they can leave their good manners and common sense outside when they enter places where people exercise. They get grim at the gym and become so focused on what they are doing that they lose all consideration for others.

Maybe it's all those mirrors.

If anything, the opposite attitude is required. Courtesy and consideration are required to minimize distractions and to promote safety.

**Ten Guidelines for Gym-goers**

**1** Dress for success. The key words are clean and functional. Scant, sexy dressing is inappropriate because it is distracting and embarrassing. Avoid anything that drapes or dangles. Wearing jewelry while working out is downright stupid.



**You really should abide by some gym rules.** (BARRY SLOAN)

Don't walk around in bare feet or with flimsy footwear, either — you could walk into a metal plate or barbell and break a toe.

**2** Lock your gear in the dressing room. Otherwise, somebody could trip over it, get tangled in the straps, and fall.

**3** Don't be a drinking problem. Keep your water in an

enclosed, unbreakable container. Don't even think about bringing food into class.

**4** Keep it quiet. Exercise your jaws outside of class, not by talking during class. Loud grunts and moans are also unnecessary.

**5** Rest those smartphones. They should be on silent mode, and if you need to check incoming info, move out of others' way before you do.

**6** Cleanliness is next to godliness. Marinated gym clothes (the kind you leave in the trunk of your car or your locker and then wear again) are guaranteed to help you lose friends and transform your group activity into a solitary performance.

**7** Keep your cool. So what if you always work out in the

corner but someone beats you to it this time? Group classes operate on a democratic system. Let off your steam in the workout; not by lobbing nasty salvos at the "offender."

**8** By definition, classes are group activities. So forget about doing your own routine; instead, do your best to keep up with the class. Your instructor deserves the benefit of the doubt.

**9** Don't crowd. Consider others' exercise space and don't crowd them.

**10** Towel off. And not just yourself. Gym equipment should be wiped down, too. (Ever notice how most people who take the time to wipe off their yoga mats are the ones who own theirs? Just asking.) (REUTERS)