

## Men's Health

05/09  
ALPHA MALE  
Skills

# It's molar time

On your next visit to the drill sergeant, go prepared

**L**ife is a series of ultimatums: work or starve, pay or leave, visit the dentist or end up gumming your food. You might connive your way out of the first two choices, but you can't avoid the

scare chair forever. Unless you want to end up swallowing liquid food for the rest of your life, of course. These tips will reduce the screaming at your six-monthly checkup.

### PLUG IT RIGHT

Any dentist offering to remove your 'toxic' silver fillings is a sham, says Dr Ajay Sharma, consultant dental surgeon, Max Healthcare. But you can replace impractical metals (gold, silver) which have mercury content with cosmetic fillings which range from Rs 800-Rs 1,200 and don't contain any mercury," says Dr Sharma.

### SIZE HIM UP

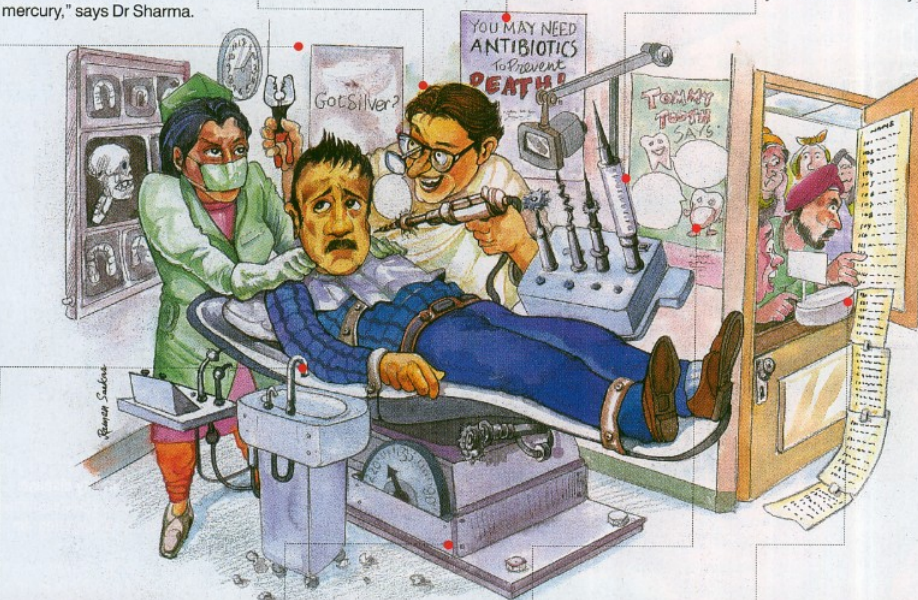
Choose a dentist who sees about 15 patients a day, recommends Dr Sharma. If he gives you a 30-second glance, he can overlook a serious problem. Each appointment should last for at least 20 minutes taking into consideration complex procedures.

### PROTECT YOUR HEART

If you have a heart ailment of any kind (including a murmur), make sure that you see your doctor before your dental appointment. Dental work could release oral bacteria into your blood and lead to a heart attack. Taking antibiotics can protect you.

### GET THE RIGHT ANAESTHETIC

For quick procedures, ask for a short-acting drug. Speak up if you have hypertension or take Prozac, to avoid reactions. "There are a range of surface anaesthetics to ease the needle sting," says New Delhi-based dentist Dr Lipika Sethi. "Get a skin allergy test and discuss your medical history."



### DON'T GLOW THERE

Get 'bitewing' x-rays (which show only the back teeth) every two years, although there are no hard and fast rules. Also, get full-mouth panoramic x-rays every five years; send a copy of these to your doctor because they can reveal arterial blockages.

### KEEP YOUR HEAD UP

Reclining makes some people gag, says Mark Slovin, DDS. Along with the gargling and constant spitting, this can be a problem. To avoid this ask your dentist to tilt the chair only about 135 degrees.

### OPEN WIDER

Make sure that the dentist checks you thoroughly for oral cancer. He should scan your tongue, your gums, the roof of your mouth, and your neck for lumps and discoloration.

### FEEL NO PAIN

As a precaution, swallow two ibuprofen tabs an hour before your visit. "It is good to have an analgesic to ease anxiety," adds Dr Sethi. "If one is on Coldsprin or Ecosprin, discontinue the medicine to avoid complications, but with prior doctor's consent."

**TWO-SECOND TIP** FLOSS YOUR TEETH FOR LONGER LIFE: GUM DISEASE CAN INCREASE RISK OF HEART PROBLEMS BY 72 PER CENT

ILLUSTRATION: RAMESH SANKAR

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