

Resource

## Visiting the dentist

Visiting the dentist need not be a dreaded experience. Your dentist and dental care team (i.e. dental therapists, hygienists, nurses, etc.) are here to help you.

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Dental care professionals are regulated by the [General Dental Council](#). To find an NHS dentist, please visit [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) or call NHS 111. [Click here](#) for information on dental charges.

My main problem is because it's [RA] affected my jaw, so my jaw is smaller...I haven't got a large mouth really so I actually hate going to the dentist because I find it hard to keep my mouth open for that amount of time...

Visiting the dentist need not be a dreaded experience. Your dentist and dental care team (i.e. dental therapists, hygienists, nurses, etc.) are here to help you. Here are some helpful tips to make the experience more comfortable for you:

- Organise appointments at times that are more suitable for you – for example, if you experience more stiffness in the morning then go in the afternoon.
- Try to book appointments on days when you have not too much else on so you won't be too tired before the visit and can rest after.
- Ask for shorter (but more frequent) appointments where possible if you struggle to lie down or keep your mouth open for long periods of time.
- Check if a downstairs surgery is available if you have mobility issues.
- Bring your own small pillow or cushion to help support your head and neck on the dental chair. Surgeries are unable to provide you with one for hygiene reasons but bringing your own is fine.
- Inform the dental team of your RA and any medication that you may be taking (it would be helpful to take along a copy of the latest letter from your rheumatologist to your GP which will show the current status of your RA and what medication you are on). This is important as it can affect the choice of treatment or how it is carried out: for example, if you are taking steroids, the dose may need to be increased prior to having a tooth removed.
- Be forthcoming with any concerns about your RA, visiting the dentist and anything else on your first visit. Remember, everybody is different, so it is important to get across how YOU are affected so the dental team can plan your treatment accordingly.

Say to your dentist that you have rheumatoid and what medications you are on and what difficulties you have...

Don't feel you are wasting the dentist's time or making a fuss. Being clear and concise at the beginning of what is comfortable and uncomfortable for you will mean the dental team can plan your treatment better and make for a less stressful experience for all.

With a little bit of advance planning and good communication with the dental care team about your condition, many routine dental problems can be treated at your dental practice without requiring referral to a hospital.

For the latest advice on dental care and COVID-19, please visit:  
<https://www.dentalhealth.org/Pages/FAQs/Category/coronavirus>

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