

It used to really bother me when patients asked that question. From a patient perspective I supposed it is a good question, but I felt like they were saying I was dishonest. I always asked myself, "Why would I tell them they need something that I didn't really think was best for them?"

I used to try to explain all of the reasons for the procedure in detail (complete with anatomy lesson) exactly as we learned in dental school, often becoming more frustrated because some patients seemed to feel like I was selling them something.

Others would then just look at me and say, "Hey, whatever you think, Doc."

I soon realized the important question is "What level of dental health do you want to achieve?" Some people are convinced bleeding gums are normal and only need a cleaning once a year. Other patients become very concerned if there is bleeding around just one tooth, and come in every two months to make sure they maintain optimum health.

Do I need that cracked filling replaced? Do I need a crown on that tooth? I can only tell you what may happen if it is not done. You must decide if you want to take the risk. Will the old filling last until next year? Dentists cannot predict the future. Your dentist should be willing to take the time to explain all of the procedures and reasons in as much detail as you need, if they cannot or won't, move on. Second (or third) opinions are sometimes best for both parties. Convince yourself, You should do a little research if you are not sure you need a procedure. There is so much information on the Internet about all dental procedures, you will easily find a site that fills in all the missing pieces for you. Most offices have prepared information to allow you to learn as much detail as you feel you need.

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