

# Your Health And Well-Being

## Five Important Steps Dental Patients Can Take To Protect Themselves From Infection

(NAPSA)—Recent news reports about unsafe practices at a number of U.S. dental offices have raised concerns about dental infection control procedures and caused patients to question the safety of the dental offices they visit. A sterile environment is essential for a safe visit to the dentist and there are important safeguards that patients can take to minimize the risk of getting an infection during dental treatment, according to Noel Brandon-Kelsch, a registered dental hygienist and the infection control columnist for RDH magazine.

“Since recent news broke about dentists who don’t follow proper dental safety procedures, a lot of patients have asked what things they should watch for when they are at the dentist,” said Brandon-Kelsch. “I encourage patients to start a conversation with their dental professional about infection control procedures. Good hygienists or dentists are happy to answer questions and put their patients at ease that they are doing everything possible to minimize infection.”

Bacteria can be found in the most unexpected places, as a recent study found. Researchers at the Forsyth Institute in Cambridge, Massachusetts discovered that a significant number of dental bib clips—the metal or rubber clips that go around the patient’s neck to hold the dental napkin in place—still harbor bacteria from the patient, dental clinician and the environment even *after* the clips had undergone standard disinfection procedures.

Kelsch recommends patients follow five tips to minimize their exposure to infection at the dentist office.

- Request a disposable, one-time-use bib holder from your dental professional.



**Always ask for a disposable, one-time-use bib holder from your dental professional.**

- If a disposable bib holder isn’t available, ask the clinician to fully sterilize the rubber or metal bib clips.

- Always make sure the clinician washes his or her hands and puts on fresh gloves before beginning treatment in your mouth.



If the clinician touches anything else with his or her gloves—the bib clip, the computer, his or her face—you have the right to ask for a change of gloves.

- Make sure you see the dental professional open a fresh sterilization pouch of instruments. If you don’t see it opened in front of you, ask how the instruments you see were sterilized. All dental instruments used on a patient should be sterile.

- Make sure you see that the dental professional is wearing gloves, a lab coat over his or her uniform, glasses and a mask during all procedures, including a cleaning. If you notice that something is missing, give him or her a friendly reminder.

To read the full research study about dental bib clip bacteria, visit [www.dentalbibclipbacteria.com](http://www.dentalbibclipbacteria.com).