

SNOWBIRD APPOINTMENTS

Dear Dr McCrummen: My spouse and I head south in the fall and usually have a difficult time getting in to see our local dentist before we go home. When we do get in we cannot get an appointment for fillings in time before we leave. Can you offer a solution? Dental care up here is so much nicer than in the big city. They take their time, are compassionate, and they communicate with us. It is much more personal and friendly, and it costs much less. We prefer to have all of our dental appointments up here. Thank you for the interesting information you provide in the newspaper. G.N.

Usually, September and October are the main exodus months for the "Snowbirds". Snowbirds, for those who may not be familiar with the term, are the people that live here in summer and head for their southern homes before the snow falls.

The solution is for you and your dental team to plan ahead. We encourage our southern patients to call us for an appointment before they head north so they can be seen shortly after they arrive, or pre-book this appointment. This is especially important if an insurance company requires a minimum of 6 months, to the day, for bi-annual benefits. If you are seen in April you should pre-schedule your October appointment so you can be seen again before you leave. The better insurance policies allow two visits at any time during the year. If you do not have to rely on dental insurance rules it is easier to plan your appointments.

The issue of treatment time is more difficult. I suggest that when you reserve your last appointment you ask for time to be reserved in case treatment is needed. Most offices will be glad to schedule a treatment appointment a few days after your final cleaning and examination. It allows you to be seen soon after a problem is diagnosed. This also allows the office time to appoint another person desiring earlier treatment into that reserved spot if you do not require any dental care. Ideally, the treatment visit should be a month before you plan on leaving in case you require extensive treatment such as a crown. Plan ahead so you will not be disappointed.

Call for an appointment as soon as you have the thought that you may leave early. If they have no time available ask if you can be placed on a "short-notice call list". It is a list for people with time flexibility that would like to be seen earlier if another person must change their appointment. This helps both you and your dental office. Most offices try to leave time for unexpected problems or emergencies, and are happy to help you if they can.