

Teeth, face and feet: The new dental experience

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Finally there's a reason to smile at the dentist's: A patient relaxes after a foot massage given during a dental procedure.

NEW YORK (CNN) -- Say the word "spa" and most of us think "relaxation". Say the word "dentist" and at least one in every seven Americans will think words like "anxiety", "pain", and "fear".

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, fewer than two-thirds of adult Americans reported visiting a dentist during the past 12 months.

Another widely reported factoid suggests only half of the American population gets regular dental care. So some dentists are changing their practices to make the dental experience a more relaxing one for more people.

Spa techniques like reflexology --strategic foot massage -- can help relax anxious dental patients. It's a technique used by New York City dentist Dr. Paul Tanners in his practice.

Tanners insists his dental suite on tony Madison Avenue is not a dental spa. "No lemon slices on eyelids here," he quips.

But he does provide patients with the luxury of having their soles pampered during their dental work.

"You know you're having your having dentistry done, you don't forget for a second, but you kinda focus on your feet," says Tanners of his patients.

The last time Gary Weinstein visited Dr. Tanners' office, he stayed in the dentist's chair for an extra 20 minutes -- even though the dentist was finished working on him.

Why? Weinstein says blame it on the reflexology.