

Find The Right Dentist For Your Needs



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With advances in dentistry, evolution of specialization, and marketing trends, choosing the right dentist for a specific need has become increasingly difficult for many people. Your engagement and making good decision about your treatment and the care provider you choose is an important part of your ultimate experience and results. Here is a simple guide in understanding various dental specialties and what they do best to help you choose the right dentist:

In this guide, you will find:

- How to choose the right dentist for oral surgical procedures
- List of all professionally recognized dental specialties
- Training background of each specialty and what they do best

How to Choose the Right Dentist for Oral Surgical Procedures:

Your choice of a dentist is probably the single biggest decision you will make. The most appropriate dental specialist for performing wisdom teeth surgery is an oral surgeon who is specifically trained for this procedure. There are several ways to find an oral surgeon that meets your needs and personality:

Your dentist can recommend an oral surgeon that he or she knows, trusts, and, has had great experiences with. You might also get personal recommendations from family members, friends, or co-workers who have had the surgery. Online research has become an increasingly popular way to find dentists, and provides helpful information about their practice, in addition to patient reviews. Advertisements are another way. In some instances, your general dentist may have decided to perform the wisdom teeth surgery. Here are some questions to ask to help you make the right decision:

Q: Are you an oral surgeon?

An oral surgeon is the only dental specialist trained specifically for extraction of third molars. Having treated thousands of patients, you can be certain that you are in the hands of an expert. Here are the key reasons why you would want to select an oral surgeon to perform your surgery:

- Oral surgeons are the only dental specialists who can provide IV sedation anesthesia in the office.
- Oral surgeons can perform the procedure quicker and more conservatively, which translates into less pain, less swelling, and less overall complications*
- Oral surgeons use special instruments and equipment designed specifically for extractions, making it safe and easier to perform.
- Oral surgeons have the knowledge, experience, and the ability to handle challenges, complications, or unusual circumstances that may arise.
- The office is equipped with proper surgical equipment and staff is specifically trained for surgical procedures creating a safe environment.

Q: How many wisdom teeth patients do you treat every week?

Some dentists may have specific interests and experience with wisdom teeth extractions and although not an oral surgeon, may perform the procedure with same predictability. However, this level of experience requires a dentist to treat at least three to five wisdom teeth patients a week. In his book, *Outliers***, Malcolm Gladwell discusses the “10,000 Hour Rule”. It says achieving excellence at performing a complex task, with true mastery, greatness, and status as a world-class expert in anything, requires 10,000 hours of practice. Be cautious- ask if wisdom teeth surgery is an occasional procedure for them or something they do routinely. Also, your choice of anesthesia may be limited to local anesthesia only, therefore being awake.

Q) What formal training do you have?

Oral surgeons receive four to six years of formal surgical training in hospital-based residency programs. Some dentists may take courses on extractions on dental implants. These courses vary in duration and intensity, from a short weekend course to a series over a year or more. Majority of courses are classroom style and do not provide surgical training to the participants. If your dentist is not an oral surgeon, ask about the extent of his or her training.

Q) Do you specialized training in dental implants?

Successful dental implant surgery requires formal training and years of experience. While it's a highly successful and predictable procedure, it's not simple, requiring the skills of a trained specialist and restorative dentist working as a team. Oral surgeon and periodontists are the only two specialty who receive formal surgical training and spend intensive continuing education and practice to achieve predictable results. Beware of dentists how perform dental implant surgery after completing some weekend courses. Implants have a more than **98 percent success rate** when performed by the right team of dentists that use quality implants, customized components, and reputable labs. This saves patients money by preventing complications and re-dos, and improving longevity.

Q) What anesthesia options do you offer?

Decide whether you want to be sleep or not for the procedure. More than 98 percent of patients choose IV sedation for wisdom teeth surgery as offered by almost all oral surgeons. The alternative is being awake with use of local anesthesia (numbing) only. The decision for the type of anesthesia is often based on the complexity of the surgery as well as level of patient's anxiety.

Q) How long does the surgery take?

In most patients, extraction of all four wisdom teeth takes 15 to 20 minutes when performed by an experienced oral surgeon. Placement of a single dental implant can take 15 to 30 minutes if done properly. Increase in surgical time may contribute to additional pain and swelling following surgery. Depending on the level of experience, staff support, and type of instruments, treatment time may increase to 45 to 60 minutes if performed by dentists other than oral surgeons.

Understanding General Dentistry and Specialists

General dentist

A general dentist has graduated from a 4-year dental school with no additional formal post-doctorate residency. Some may have completed a 1-year general practice residency program following dental school, providing them additional clinical experience and expertise. Some general dentists may have also taken extensive courses on specific disciplines, such as cosmetic dentistry, periodontal surgery, dental implants, endodontics, or orthodontics. Therefore they may perform these specialty procedures with great proficiency and can provide excellent treatment even in the most complex patients. As there are no specific regulations, it is best for patients to inquire about the proficiency and experience of a general dentist regarding complex procedures that are more often performed by specialists.

You will benefit from a general dentist if you have the following needs:

- General restorative needs (fillings, crowns, bridges, dentures, etc.)
- Routine periodontal care (Cleaning, management of early or moderate periodontal disease)
- Cosmetic procedures (bleaching, bonding, veneers, etc)

If a general dentist has additional training and experience, they may provide:

- Simple extractions, root canals, orthodontics, periodontal procedures, and some pediatric dentistry.
- Complex restorative, cosmetic, and surgical procedures may also be offered depending on their experience, proficiency, and personal comfort.

Most general dentists choose to refer all or most of the specialty or complex procedures to specialists.

Professionally Recognized Dental Specialties

Prosthodontics:

A prosthodontist has received three additional years of post-doctoral training in dentistry gaining advanced skills in both cosmetic and restorative procedures. Some may also perform common periodontal or oral surgery procedures, but most focus on treatment of patients with complex cosmetic and restorative needs. In a patient with multi-disciplinary needs (e.g a patient who needs crowns, implants, root canal treatment, and gum surgery), a prosthodontist will act as both the restorative dentist and the coordinator of the overall treatment and other team dentists.

You will benefit from a prosthodontist if you have the following needs:

- Both simple and complex restorative needs (crowns, bridges, veneers, etc.)
- Dental implants and reconstructive dentistry
- Rehabilitation of patients with partial or complete missing teeth
- Advanced cosmetic procedures (bleaching, veneers, tooth reshaping, bonding)
- Multi-disciplinary complex dental needs

Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery:

Oral surgeons receive 4-6 years (6 years for combined DDS / MD programs) of post-doctoral training in accredited residency programs. They receive hospital-based training in oral and facial surgical procedures and anesthesia, in addition to extensive medical training to care for the medically compromised patients. Most are board certified as necessary for obtaining hospital privileges. Oral surgeons are limited to performing surgical procedures and anesthesia and offer key role in the overall care of dental patients.

You will benefit from an oral surgeon if you have the following needs:

- Extraction of teeth (Wisdom teeth and others)
- Dental implant placement (surgical aspect)
- Minor and major bone grafting procedures to create site for implants
- Oral biopsies
- Corrective Jaw surgery (orthognathic surgery)
- Oral and facial infections
- Oral and facial trauma
- TMJ related treatments
- IV sedation / Anesthesia
- Procedures requiring hospitalization
- Surgical treatments in pediatric patients

Endodontics:

Endodontists are root canal treatment specialists. They receive 2-3 years of post-graduate training on treatment of conditions affecting tooth's root canal system. Endodontists have advanced surgical and non-surgical skills that make them uniquely qualified to treat routine as well as complex cases. The root canal contains the blood supply and nerve tissue vital to a healthy tooth. Insults such as decay, trauma, or other infections can compromise its health, therefore requiring root canal treatments. Current techniques, instrumentations, and technology (such as microscopes) allow endodontists achieve high treatment success.

You will benefit from an endodontist if you have the following needs:

- Saving a non-vital or irreversibly inflamed tooth and avoid extraction
- Root canal treatment for teeth that exhibit temperature sensitivity or pain due to decay or trauma
- Teeth with abscess due to necrotic root or other types of pathology (such as cysts) compromising its health

Orthodontics:

Orthodontists receive 2-3 years of post-graduate training, specializing in straightening teeth and management of jaw relations in both children and adults. Crooked and crowded teeth are prone to decay, periodontal disease, and possible loss. Misalignment of the teeth and jaws can lead to premature wear, further damage and chronic facial and joint pain. Through use of braces or other techniques such as invisalign, orthodontists can align teeth for improved function and aesthetics. Orthodontic related treatments may start in patients in as early as 8 years old or adult patients.

You will benefit from an orthodontist if you have the following needs:

- Straighten and align teeth for improved bite and aesthetics
- Correction of misaligned or asymmetrical jaws
- Retainers or night guards
- Treatment of TMJ and facial muscles related pain

Periodontics:

Periodontists receive 2-3 years of post-graduate training for treatment of gum disease, various gingival procedures (functional and cosmetic), and dental implants for teeth replacement. Periodontists often work along with general dentists or prosthodontists for long term periodontal care of patients (bone and gum tissue surrounding teeth). They provide both preventive periodontal care as well as both surgical and non-surgical management of periodontal disease. While some procedures are performed by both periodontists and oral surgeons, they often work in collaboration on patients with complex needs requiring both expertise.

You will benefit from a periodontist if you have the following needs:

- Surgical and non-surgical treatment of gum disease
- Preventive periodontal procedures
- Treatment of gum recession via grafting procedures
- Cosmetic gingival procedures
- Minor bone grafting
- Dental implants placement

Pediatric Dentistry:

Pediatric dentists receive 2-3 years of specialized training after dental school, and are dedicated to the oral health of children from infancy through the teenage years. The very young, pre-teens, and teenagers all need different approaches in dealing with their behavior, guiding their dental growth and development, and helping them avoid future dental problems. Some may provide oral sedation for increased patient comfort. Pediatric dentists may work in collaboration with orthodontists to treat growth related teeth or jaw misalignment.

You will benefit from a pediatric dentist if you have the following needs:

- Any dental related procedures in patients from infancy to early teen-age years
- Fillings, crowns, and root canal procedures on primary teeth
- Knocked out or fractured primary teeth (may require an oral surgeon)
- Treatment of minor trauma to primary teeth
- Routine cleaning and preventive dental procedures

About Dr. H. Ryan Kazemi



Dr. H. Ryan Kazemi is an oral and maxillofacial surgeon certified by the American Board of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons. He received his dental degree from the University of Pennsylvania, School of Dental Medicine in 1990. Following a one-year internship at the Albert Einstein Medical Center in Philadelphia, he pursued surgical training at The Washington Hospital Center in Washington, DC, where he received his certificate in Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery. Dr. Kazemi has practiced in Bethesda, Maryland, since 1997, providing a full spectrum of oral and maxillofacial surgery procedures with emphasis on extractions, dental implants, bone grafting, and corrective jaw surgery.

Dr. Kazemi is a diplomat of the American Board of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons, and an active member of the American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons, American College of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, Academy of Osseointegration, American Dental Association and Entrepreneur Organization.

He has served as the founder and president of several dental and implant study clubs in the Washington DC area. Dr. Kazemi has published and lectured extensively on dental implants, bone grafting, and practice management. His newsletter, *To-The-Point* is read by more than 2000 dentists every month. He is also the founder of DDSForums.com, a professional networking site for dentists.

Dr. Kazemi serves on the medical staff for D.C. United, the major soccer league team in Washington, D.C. and the US national soccer team for the care of their athletes.

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