

Tourism Dentistry – Dental treatment while on holiday

... be wary

Have you ever heard of someone going to Thailand or India to have their crowns made; their root canal treatment; their dental implants placed? Chances are they went on an all-inclusive dental holiday package. This may have included airfares, accommodation, dental treatment, and even a holiday afterwards in a relaxing location in the sun by a beach. And all this for less than the cost of having the dentistry here in New Zealand.

Sound simple? A little too good to be true? Before you start packing your bags, we ask that you carefully consider the real cost, and the very real risks you are taking in having your dentistry overseas.

Increasingly, dentists here in New Zealand are being asked to pick up the pieces after less than competent dental treatment has been performed overseas. In other words, New Zealand dentists are having to “put right” dental procedures performed overseas that have not gone according to plan. This is often difficult, and frequently entails a more significant treatment programme. It may also be that the New Zealand dentist has little or no information about exactly what methods or procedures have been carried out by the overseas dentist.

Are you putting yourself at risk? Things to consider before having dental treatment overseas.

Can you verify your overseas dentist’s qualifications?

While highly qualified and skilled dentists and dental specialists work in countries all over the world, verifying the qualifications of the dentist doing your treatment could be difficult. The Dental Council – New Zealand’s regulatory authority on all things dental – has a list of qualifications suitable for registration as a dentist in New Zealand. You can ask the Dental Council if a qualification would allow a dentist to practise in New Zealand. This may give you a guide as to your overseas dentist’s competence.

Are you happy meeting your dentist only briefly before treatment?

Building a relationship with your dentist gives you the opportunity to discuss the sort of treatment you wish to pursue. With holiday dental treatment, you will probably meet your dentist shortly before treatment begins. By that stage, you will have already paid a considerable amount of money just to be there. If you don’t feel comfortable with the dentist, don’t like their manner, have trouble communicating with them, or are presented with a different dentist than you were expecting, what will you do?

Can you also be certain that your dentist will have full knowledge of both your past medical and dental histories? It is important that they know and understand both of these so that accurate treatment can be delivered safely.



www.healthysmiles.org.nz



NEW ZEALAND
DENTAL ASSOCIATION
www.nzda.org.nz

Dentistry is both invasive and irreversible

No dentistry should ever be taken lightly. There are considerable links between oral health and general health, and you can't reverse dental treatment once it is done! When sedation or general anaesthesia is used as part of your treatment, you also need to know that the person performing the sedation or anaesthesia is suitably qualified in that role. For general anaesthesia, full medical training and several years of specialist training is required in New Zealand. Can you verify that any other treatment providers involved in your treatment are suitably qualified?

Is this the right procedure for you?

Any invasive dental procedure cannot be reversed. Can you be sure that the treatment being recommended is the most appropriate treatment? Should you lose your precious enamel to a porcelain veneer? Are there other options? Such decisions are not to be made hastily – or to fit your holiday schedule.

Are the dental materials and equipment the best available?

Dental equipment and materials are expensive. However not all materials are the same. Do you know what is in the materials you are having placed in your mouth? This is a question that your New Zealand dentist can answer to make you feel comfortable that top quality materials are used to restore your teeth.

Are the equipment sterilization procedures up to date? New Zealand dentists are required to completely sterilize equipment before that equipment is used in your treatment. Can you be confident that you will not be exposed to the Hepatitis or AIDS viruses?

Flying after surgery increases the risk of complications

Relatively straightforward procedures like fillings and crowns are unlikely to cause problems on the flight home. However, oral surgical procedures such as wisdom teeth removal or dental implant surgery may increase the already heightened risk of blood clots (deep vein thrombosis) and pulmonary embolism (when a blood clot breaks off and travels into your lungs). You need to allow for a reasonable length of time both before and after surgery to lessen the risk of such complications. There is no hard and fast rule, but up to two weeks for some procedures has been recommended by our medical colleagues.

Who will manage any necessary follow-up care?

When your dental treatment goes well, and there are no complications, then regular preventive maintenance visits with your dentist in New Zealand will help you maintain your oral health. But what happens when things go wrong? When the root-filled tooth becomes infected; when the crown comes off; when the veneers are not the right shape or colour, or one pops off as soon as you get on the flight home? All dental care requires ongoing preventive maintenance, and you are not likely to be visiting your "holiday dentist" on a regular basis. Who will cover the costs of any remedial treatment required? Often, these situations are not easy to manage, and may cost you much more than you have "saved" by having the work done while on holiday.

We advise that you think carefully about such issues. Be prepared for problems that sometimes occur in the best of care, but occur more frequently when proper planning is not carried out. This may happen when inferior equipment or materials are used, or when treatment is rushed. If you don't like the results of your holiday treatment, revision can be costly, and it may not be as successful as having it done properly in the first place.

Is price your only concern?

You can be assured that your New Zealand Dental Association dentist is qualified to give you professional advice, and discuss treatment options that are available to you. Price should not be your only guide, and a travel agent should not be your advisor about your oral health. Make sure you seek advice from an oral health expert before you make such important decisions.

If you have any questions please contact the Association: New Zealand Dental Association

nzdainfo@nzda.org.nz

or discuss your oral health issues with your NZDA dentist.



www.healthysmiles.org.nz



NEW ZEALAND
DENTAL ASSOCIATION
www.nzda.org.nz