

Does Severe Gagging Make You Avoid Dental Visits?

Many patients avoid the dentist due to severe gagging when they have work done. There are several methods to alleviate severe gagging including nitrous oxide and acupuncture. Gurnee dentist helps patient with severe gagging get the care they need.

Oct. 30, 2009 - [PRLog](#) -- A study in the British Medical Journal discusses the use of Acupuncture for severe gagging. Dr Ira L Shapira, a Gurnee, Illinois dentist uses several methods to help patients with severe gagging. Acupuncture is one exciting possibility for severe gagging but there are several possibilities to create a better patient experience.

Salt on the tongue or a procedure called a Temporal Tap can be used for short procedures such as taking x-rays or impressions. Nitrous oxide or laughing gas can also eliminate the gag reflex in most patients. More severe cases can be treated with sedation.

Dr Shapira practices with his partner Dr Mark J Amidei at Delany Dental Care Ltd in Gurnee, Illinois in Northern Lake County and can be reached at 847-623-5530 or thru their website at <http://www.ihatecpap.com>

The use of Acupuncture to reduce the gag reflex has been shown to be effective.

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" According to a new study published in the British Dental Journal, stimulation of an acupuncture point on the ear prior to undergoing treatment effectively controls the gag reflex, allowing dentists to perform a variety of procedures without compromising the patient's safety and comfort.

The investigators chose 10 people between the ages of 40 and 65, each of whom had been referred to a sedation unit because of an exaggerated gag reflex. All of the subjects were rated either a four or five (out of five points) on the Gagging Severity Index, making conventional treatment impossible and having an adverse affect on their ability to seek a dentist for care. Prior to referral, six people were able to receive treatment only with intravenous sedation; two were unable to receive treatment because of their gag reflexes; and two had avoided dental care altogether out of fear.

Before being treated by the dentist, each patient received acupuncture at a point on the upper part of the ear between the concha and triangular fossa. The researchers used a fine needle (7mm) into the anti-gagging point of each ear to a depth of three millimeters. The needles were manipulated for 30 seconds prior to dental treatment and remained in place until the patient was discharged.

Figure 1: Anti-gagging point, left ear. Using ear acupuncture, the patients underwent a total of 25 dental treatment episodes. Episodes ranged from routine forms of care, such as fillings, impressions and teeth cleaning, to more complicated procedures, including extractions, root canals and biopsies. All of the patients tolerated the acupuncture extremely well; according to the researchers, "there were no reactions to the technique." Only two episodes of mild gagging were noted, and all of the subjects were able to travel home without assistance.

Many of the participants expressed their joy at being able to undergo treatment without gagging. Some patients said they had "tried everything" to control their gag reflexes before taking part in the study. Others reported that because of their fear, they had avoided seeing a dentist and worried how they would cope if faced with a dental emergency. One patient even reported she had searched "for the last 20 years" trying to find a cure for her dental gagging before turning to acupuncture.

"You would not expect 100% success with just a placebo effect, especially as the patients had had the problem for a long, long time, and their attitude was it probably won't work," said Dr. Janice Fisk, a clinical assistant at the department of sedation and special care dentistry at Guy's Hospital in London and the

study's lead author.

In addition to the perceived patient benefits, ear acupuncture was considered a quick and cost-effective adjunctive to dental care. The researchers estimated an added cost of only 0.2 pounds (approximately 29 cents) per person per treatment episode, and an additional treatment time of only 2-3 minutes per episode. "The technique of ear acupuncture is relatively non-invasive," they wrote. "It causes little discomfort, is cheap and requires little additional time. The patient is unaffected by the technique, does not require an escort, and can return to normal daily activities after treatment."

While the scientists were unable to determine how acupuncture suppressed the gag reflex, they did offer a possible explanation. In the traditional theories of auricular acupuncture, different ear points are associated with different body parts and are roughly equivalent to those of a fetus mapped out on the external surface of the ear. In this instance, the anti-gagging point did not correspond to the traditional location of the head on the lobe of the ear. In describing the technique's mechanism of action, however, they observed that one of the main nerves involved in swallowing, the vagus nerve, also supplies the part of the ear that contains the anti-gagging acupuncture point. The point is also adjacent to a branch of the trigeminal nerve. Together, the trigeminal and vagus nerves are responsible for much of the sensory and motor functions of the larynx, pharynx and palate. "One can only speculate that in some way, as yet not understood, stimulation of the anti-gagging points activates mechanisms that inhibit the muscle activity of the gag reflex," they wrote."

Fiske J, Dickinson C. The role of acupuncture in controlling the gagging reflex using a review of ten cases. British Dental Journal June 9, 2001;190(11):611-613.

Acupuncture cures dental gagging. BBC News, June 12, 2001. Available online at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/health/newsid_1383000/13...

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Delany Dental Care Ltd is a general dental practice focusing on adult patients desiring cosmetic, reconstructive and Implant entistry. Dr Shapira has a snoring and Sleep Apnea treatment center at Delany Dental Care. information on sleep apnea, sleep apnea treatment and cpap alternatives are available at www.ihatecpap.com This is the premiere site for the promotion of Dental Sleep Medicine and Sleep Apnea Dentisits.

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| Source | Ira L Shapira DDS, DABDSM, DAAPM, FICCMO |
| City/Town | Gurnee |
| State/Province | Illinois |
| Zip | 60031 |
| Country | United States |
| Industry | Beauty , Health , Medical |
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