

SMILE!

21-CENTURY DENTISTRY BEATS THE BAD OLD DAYS **By Karen Haywood Queen**

HALF A CENTURY OVER, A DENTIST MIGHT fix a cavity with a pair of pliers. One quick, hard yank and the problem tooth was no longer a problem. A trip to the dentist was either a necessary evil, or people just didn't go. Many people over 50 wore dentures. A dentist's office was a dreary place. Couldn't even say "nice place to visit."

Fast forward to today. People are seeking to look better into what used to be considered old age. Teeth in a cup? Forget it.

Patients are choosing to come to the dentist these days to improve their appearance and health. These 21st-century offices are making it an easier choice. Dentists can replace missing teeth, brighten existing teeth and offer a range of services that will improve dental health and appearance. Correction—*overall*

health and appearance.

Going to the dentist needn't be a scary experience or even a dreaded chore anymore. Some dentists strive to make their office pleasant places to be. More dentists are offering VIP days where patients with multiple dental needs can come in and be seen in one long visit instead of having to interrupt their jobs or lives for numerous repeat visits. While waiting or being treated, the music is not the medical elevator music of the past; instead, patients listen to oldies rock or something a bit more eclectic.

"You hear the music as you get out in the parking lot and it carries you in," says Dr. Lisa Marie Samaha of Newport News, whose office plays New Age music over the sound system.

Dr. J. Stuart Oglesby in Williamsburg offers first-time patients a loaf of homemade bread, baked fresh in a bread machine in the office

that sends out a pleasant yeasty smell. Oglesby and Samaha are among those dentists who offer patients drinks, protein shakes, neck wraps, massage, soft blankets and even aromatherapy. They offer the VIP visits as well.

Samaha's office looks more like an art gallery with her striking original paintings hanging everywhere from the expansive two-story lobby/waiting area to the halls and treatment rooms. The treatment rooms all look out onto a courtyard garden with a relaxing fountain and koi pond, a spot so beautiful she has rented it out for weddings and receptions. Upstairs is an art gallery where she paints and offers dental training seminars. "I've had patients not want to leave the treatment room," she says. "The music and the view are almost hypnotic. They ask if they can stay after their appointment is over." **HR**

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