

# Smile saver

This doc tells us what's up when it comes to creating a nice set of pearly whites.

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**M**arsha Hickey says there's nothing to fear about the dentist.

"I think dentistry has come a long way," she said. "We still have people completely terrified of the dentist, (but) it has certainly become a more pleasant experience. Don't be afraid; things have changed."

Hickey, 37, has been an Indianapolis dentist (in practice with Dr. David Wolf, see below) for two years. Prior to that, she was a dental assistant so she has a pretty good idea about what it takes to secure a winning grill.

In honor of National Save Your Smile week (Aug. 22-29), Hickey gave us the skinny on what it's like to be in contact with all those teeth and what it takes to get a truly dazzling smile.

**So, how did you decide to become a dentist?**

I had a very pleasant experience with the dentist when I was child. I had braces when I was an adolescent. It was such great exposure.

I went to dental assisting school, but once I got into it and saw how much I loved it, I figured I might as well go all the way.

It takes eight years to become a dentist — four years of undergrad and four years of dental school. Of course if you want to specialize, it takes longer.

**What's the most common problem people come in for?**

There are more cosmetic procedures that people want to have done like straightening the teeth or veneering, because of all the make-over shows.

Patients are more educated today. They come in knowing exactly what they want.

**Is teeth-whitening still all the rage? Can anyone do it?**

Whitening is still very common. It usually depends on the shade of the teeth and a person's age.

We recommend over-the-counter whiteners for younger patients because the concentration is lower. Older adults usually need something stronger.

**So, what's it like to put your fingers in everyone else's mouth? Do you abhor bad breath?**

It's so funny. To me it's not even an issue maybe because I've done it for so long.

We wear glasses, gloves and a mask so we're almost completely covered up going in.

I can't smell anything, and peo-



Lizz Giordano / For INtake

**Open sesame:** Dentist Marsha Hickey, 37, says it's not what you eat that can make or break your smile; it's how you take care of those teeth after you eat. She recommends brushing twice a day and avoiding soda.

## How to find a dentist

Tips from the Indiana Dental Association on how to locate a qualified dentist:

- Get recommendations from your family physician, friends, family, co-workers and neighbors.
- Visit [IndyDentalSociety.org](http://IndyDentalSociety.org) and search for a dentist by specialty, zip or city.
- Relocating? Try asking your current dentist for a recommendation.

## Shop around

A few things to think about while you are hunting down your perfect dentist:

- **Convenience:** How easy is the dentist's office to get to and from when you need the doctor most? How hard is it to book an appointment or reschedule? What if you have an emergency?
- **Cleanliness:** If it's not up to your standards, look elsewhere. Also, make sure the employees are using sterilization equipment and are wearing masks and gloves.
- **Payment:** Are they up-front about the cost before the procedures and whether or not your insurance will cover it? Do they take care of all the insurance paperwork?
- **Consumer-friendliness:** How does your doctor treat you? Does the dentist offer to explain procedures or preventative techniques?

ple are usually pretty good about taking care of their breath.

**Have you ever done a procedure on yourself?**

I see Dr. Wolf to get my teeth cleaned when the time comes to that.

I do treat my own family and friends.

**What does it take to have a good smile?**

Good preventative home care. You have to be brushing and flossing. People worry about stains or the way their teeth are showing fillings but you really shouldn't worry about that. Soda pop is the worst. I can't say how many times

a day I say that. Your mouth is under constant attack with all that sugar. That's our biggest enemy.

**How often should I be brushing my teeth?**

The ADA (American Dental Association) recommends brushing three times a day. When you think about the practicality of that, twice a day is probably enough.

**Is it ever too late to get a killer smile? What can I do??**

With all the advancements in dentistry, it's never too late. Invisalign invisible braces are fabulous for adults. We do a lot of that. The next thing would be dental implants.

They've been around 15 to 20 years. With better insurance, more people are getting that.

I think because of the Internet, people are pretty much treating themselves. They just want a beautiful smile.

**Now you probably have a great smile, but you have to have one vice. What is it?**

I have a huge chocolate addiction but I'm always sure to brush after I indulge. It's not what you eat, it's how you take care of your teeth after.