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# WASHINGTONIAN ONLINE

## Best Dentists

### The Area's Top General Dentists, Orthodontists, Periodontists, and Others Who Make You Smile.

By SHERRI DALPHONSE

What's the best way to find a dentist? Word of mouth, of course.

Friends, colleagues, and neighbors are a good place to start when you're searching for a new dentist. If you already have a general dentist but need a specialist for a root canal, braces, or an implant, ask your dentist to refer you to a specialist.

We used the same approach to put together this list of the area's top dentists. We sent questionnaires to 1,000 randomly selected dentists, asking them to name dentists they would send a member of their own family to. Those dentists who received the highest number of votes in each specialty are named here. Those names marked with asterisks are the top vote-getters.

Lists such as these can be criticized for leaving off good dentists or for including dentists whose reputations are bigger than their skills. How does that happen?

Dentists tend to be known by other dentists through referrals—for example, an orthodontist will see the work of pediatric dentists who refer to him or her. This works against dentists who make few referrals, who work in out-of-the-way places, or who are younger and haven't established as many connections. At the same time, dentists frequently refer to other dentists because they like the person and maybe they play golf together. In a field that's not life and death, personality can be a factor as well as talent.

To address both problems, we did our own research, interviewing experts about overlooked or overrated names.

Although the dentists on this list come highly recommended, that's no guarantee they'll be right for you. Dentists may know a peer's work. But they often can't judge things you may feel are important, such as whether a dentist is gentle, whether his or her staff is pleasant, and whether prices are reasonable. Well-known practices are often big and busy.

This list is intended as just one resource to help you find good dental care.

#### **PROSTHODONTISTS**

*Prosthodontists specialize in implants, dentures, crowns, and bridges.*

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