

Dental Tourism



For many people holidays involve sun, surf and beaches, and a cocktail by the pool. But for increasing numbers of people, they also mean a chance to get some dental work done 'on the cheap' overseas, part of a trend popularly known as "dental tourism".

The decision to become a dental tourist usually comes down to one simple thing – saving money. And while it's true you may save some money in the short term, the reality is that things can go wrong and all those expected savings can quickly disappear.

Things can go wrong

Let's be honest - things can go wrong in the dental chair. The difference is that when the work is done in Australia you're close to highly-trained dentists who can perform corrective procedures. But if the work's done overseas, you may be cut off from the expert emergency care you need.

Standards aren't as stringent

While Australian dentists are trained to a very high standard, must be registered, and are required to operate in a strictly-regulated environment, not all countries have the same requirements. The overseas dentist you select to do your dental work may not be as qualified as their Australian peers and may not be working with the same quality materials as those routinely used here.

Infection and antibiotic resistance

A matter of increasing concern for health professionals is the growth of "Superbugs" which are resistant to the antibiotics commonly used to treat serious infections. Previously rare in Australia, they are appearing more and more as people return from treatment in overseas hospitals and

clinics without this country's infection control standards. Australian dentists, by contrast, are obligated to adhere to strict infection control protocols.

Too many procedures, too little time

Many dental treatments, such as root canal surgery, need to be conducted over a number of visits at least a week apart to give the teeth and gums sufficient time to recover between procedures. Trying to squeeze a complex number of procedures into a typical holiday means you're risking all kinds of complications, even if the work is performed to an acceptable standard.

Questions to ask yourself

Before you head off on a dental holiday, you should check if your overseas dentist was trained at a reputable university and whether the health standards in that country are as rigorous as those in Australia.

Finally, will you be able to have any complications rectified and at what expense and time commitment?