

Working Together:



What You Need to Know Before Choosing a Dental Lab

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For this article on the relationship between dentists and the dental laboratory, the Florida Dental Association reached out to a dental lab, asking for a list of what they believe are the top 10 things dentists should consider before choosing a laboratory. The following is their response:

1. Not all dental laboratories make restorations in their lab. Ask the lab if they make all restorations, or if some components or complete restorations are made elsewhere.
2. Believe it or not, there are some businesses that pose as dental labs, but don't make any products – these companies are called distributors. It's important to ask if they send your cases off-shore and, if so, what precautions they take to ensure patient safety.
3. Not all labs disclose the manufacturer of origin and materials used in the fabrication of the restoration on their invoice. This is both a state and U.S. Food and Drug Administration requirement. The disclosure should read: "This custom-made device was made in (City, State, Country)."
4. Most dental technicians have been trained over-the-shoulder and many have been taught a skill in one specific area of the lab. In order to ensure your patient's restoration is fabricated with the best possible results, ask the dental lab if they have a Certified Dental Technician (CDT) on staff. The CDT designation is the only dental laboratory technician designation recognized by the American Dental Association as a measure of competency in dental technology and requires 24 continuing education credits every two years.
5. Inconsistent restorations are the number one reason why dentists switch from one lab to the next, according to a recent survey by *Lab Management Today*. Does the dental lab have a formal system in place to ensure high-quality consistency and reduction of chair-side time for you? For example, is the dental lab a Certified Dental Laboratory, certified by the National Board of Certification, Dental Appliance Manufacturing Audit System-certified or an International Organization for Standardization 9000-certified dental lab? Any and all of these certifications require Good Manufacturing Processes that meet all U.S. Food and Drug Administration requirements and are subject to physical audits and periodic re-certification inspection.
6. You may be surprised that some dental labs are not registered with the Florida Health Department. However, all dental labs are required to be registered.
7. Unfortunately, not all dental labs keep up with new technology and new techniques. With materials changing and becoming more complex, there is a greater need for a highly trained technical person at the lab who can help with case diagnostics, material applications and restorative options. These individuals should be easily accessible to you.
8. You should have as many restorative options as there are complex cases. Most advanced dental labs offer a full restorative assortment, including new all-ceramic materials, press-to-metal ceramics, implant and removable solutions.
9. Dental labs should offer continuing education courses focused on improving dentist/lab communications and other contemporary topics to help in successful treatment planning.
10. Some labs can offer easy online services such as Rx Online, DDX, digital impressions, uploading of patient photos and patient health information in a secured method accepted by Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act Security Rule, 2.3. Be sure the method in which you are sending confidential patient information is on a secured network or encrypted and that the lab is using the same methods when sending you patient information.

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