

Tooth fairy

Toronto's newest dental spa turns oral hygiene into a pampering experience. BY ANUPA MISTRY



The anxiety that surrounds a trip to the dentist isn't just a kid thing—many adults feel nervous about getting their teeth checked, even if it's just a routine appointment. But that's exactly why Georgia Thomas, a registered dental hygienist with more than 12 years of experience, opened Impressions: The Dental Hygiene Spa in Toronto last year. Her goal? To ease the dread associated with dental visits by incorporating spa-inspired relaxation techniques.

"People avoid the dentist for years because they have a fear of the very clinical environments, or because they're concerned about the cost," says Thomas. "They may also feel pressured by all of the recommendations dentists can make. There's a huge need for a more comforting experience when it comes to oral care." To that end, the cozy office (located on Toronto's busy Danforth Avenue) focuses on routine cleaning and cavity screening instead of drilling and filling. "There's no dentist here, no X-raying or needles," says Thomas. "This gives me the freedom to practice very individualized and preventative oral care." She refers patients to a dentist if their needs extend beyond cleaning and scaling teeth—but even still, there's "no pressure on the client," she says.

Instead, Thomas strives to provide a relaxing and positive experience through complimentary extras. When you first enter the bright reception space, you're greeted by a fireplace and welcoming leather armchairs, and offered a

selection of juices and herbal teas. Thomas diffuses organic lavender oil through the office to create a relaxing vibe. After hanging up your coat, you get to trade your office shoes for a pair of soft slippers—yours to keep after the appointment. Then, while in the dentist's chair, which gently kneads your back, you can watch a show on the flat-panel TV or listen to your choice of radio station. You can also opt for a pampering paraffin hand treatment, followed with warm hot towels.

Much like a trip to the dentist, Impressions offers scaling, polishing and fluoride applications, which are all covered under most employer insurance plans. Zoom whitening treatments are also available, although they're considered cosmetic procedures and therefore not covered by insurance. Still, costs are surprisingly reasonable: the overhead at a dentist's office tends to push an initial examination over \$120, but at Impressions it's just \$61. "We charge less because we can—and that's one obstacle to good oral hygiene out of the way," says Thomas. "We also know that the less clinical environment and extra details can go a long way in calming any fears." **e**

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