



What you need to
know about changes to
NHS dentistry in England

NHS dentistry is changing to provide better access to high-quality services and a new, simpler charging system.



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From 1 April 2006, this will mean:

Simpler charging

There will be three standard charges for all National Health Service (NHS) dental treatment. This will make it easier to know how much you may need to pay.

The maximum charge for a complex course of treatment has been reduced from £384 to £189.

Most courses of treatment will cost £15.50 or £42.40.

Better access to local services

Access to NHS dentistry will be improved because:

- your primary care trust (PCT) will be responsible for NHS dentistry in your area, including urgent treatment and out-of-hours care
- every PCT has money that must be used for local dental services
- if you have good oral health, you may need to see your dentist less frequently than before.

This leaflet contains information about what these changes will mean for you and answers common questions about NHS dentistry.

You will still receive:

- the same standard of treatment and care from your dentist
- free NHS dental treatment (for those who meet the exemption criteria).

Simpler charging

If you normally pay for NHS dental treatment, there will be three standard charges.

The amount you pay will depend on the treatment you need to keep your teeth and gums healthy.

You will pay one of the three charges below:

£15.50

This charge will include an examination, diagnosis and preventive care. If necessary, this will include X-rays, scale and polish, and planning for further treatment.

Urgent and out-of-hours care will also cost £15.50.

OR

£42.40

This charge includes all necessary treatment covered by the £15.50 charge PLUS additional treatment such as fillings, root canal treatment or extractions.

OR

£189.00

This charge includes all necessary treatment covered by the £15.50 and £42.40 charges PLUS more complex procedures such as crowns, dentures or bridges.

You will pay one charge even if you need to visit more than once to complete a course of treatment.

If you are referred to another dentist, you will still pay one charge (to the dentist who refers you).

If you need more treatment at the same charge level (eg an additional filling) within two months of seeing your dentist, this will be free of charge.

Example courses of treatment	Total cost
Examination, diagnosis and preventive advice	£15.50
Examination, diagnosis and preventive advice <i>and</i> one or more fillings	£42.40
Examination, diagnosis and preventive advice, one or more fillings <i>and</i> one or more crowns	£189.00

Note: you should ask your dentist how much your individual treatment plan will cost. The dental practice may ask you to pay before beginning your treatment.

There will be no charge for writing a prescription* or for removing stitches.

Dentures

Repairs to dentures will remain free of charge. If you lose or accidentally damage your dentures beyond repair, it will cost £56.70 to replace them.

*Usual charges apply when getting the prescription dispensed.

I am currently exempt from paying for NHS dental services. Will I have to pay now?

You will continue to receive free services from your NHS dentist if:

- when the treatment starts you are:
 - aged under 18
 - aged 18 and in full-time education
 - pregnant, or have had a baby, in the 12 months before treatment starts
 - an NHS inpatient and the treatment is carried out by the hospital dentist
 - an NHS Hospital Dental Service outpatient*
 - a Community Dental Service patient* or
- when the treatment starts or when the charge is made:
 - you are getting, or your partner gets Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or Pension Credit Guarantee Credit
 - you are entitled to, or named on, a valid NHS tax credit exemption certificate
 - you are named on a valid HC2 certificate.

Your dentist will ask for evidence that you are entitled to free NHS dental treatment.

If you are named on a valid HC3 certificate, you may be eligible for partial help with dental costs.

Use form HC1 to claim for full (HC2) or partial (HC3) help with NHS dental costs. HC1 forms are available from your Jobcentre Plus office or by calling 0845 850 1166 or 08701 555 455.

* There may be a charge for dentures and bridges.

Better access to local services

In the past, the NHS has had very little influence over where dental services are located or how much service is available. From 1 April 2006, your PCT is responsible for NHS dentistry in your area and will:

- have money that must be used for local dental services
- agree contracts with NHS dentists for services that best meet local needs
- be able to influence where new practices are established.

If a dentist moves, closes a practice or reduces the amount of NHS dentistry he or she provides, the money to provide this service will remain with your PCT for reinvestment in NHS dentistry for the local community.

Over time, this will help PCTs ensure that NHS dental services better meet the needs of people in your area.

To find out how you can help shape dental services, contact your local Patient and Public Involvement Forum (see page 9).

In addition, the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE)* has introduced guidelines on how often patients need to go to the dentist. Your dentist will recommend a date for your next visit based on your individual oral health needs. This means:

- people with higher treatment needs may need to attend more often than before
- people with good oral health may only need to attend once every 12 to 24 months.

If these changes mean that (on average) patients need to attend less frequently than before, this will free up time for dentists to see more patients.

*NICE is the independent organisation responsible for providing healthcare guidelines in England and Wales.

Common questions

What treatments will be available from NHS dentists?

All clinically necessary treatments and dentures will still be available on the NHS, ie treatment that is necessary to secure and maintain your oral health.

If you want, or your dentist suggests, treatment that is purely cosmetic (for example, tooth whitening, large white fillings or white crowns on back teeth), you can decide to have this treatment done privately. You should ask your dentist how much this will cost in addition to charges for NHS treatment.

As now, you can agree with your dentist to have some of your treatment provided privately.

How do I find a dentist?

Contact your local PCT or NHS Direct to find a dentist. You can always get urgent NHS dental care, even if you don't have a regular dentist (see page 8 for details).

Will my dentist still provide some private care or children-only services?

Your dentist may still provide a mixture of NHS and private care. The NHS services your dentist provides will depend on local needs and the contract they agree with your PCT.

This may mean that some dentists continue to provide children-only NHS services. However, a dentist may not accept children as NHS patients on condition that their parent(s) or guardian agree to sign up for private treatment.

Checklist for patients

Your dentist should:

- undertake a thorough examination of your mouth, teeth and gums
- explain your treatment options and let you know what can be provided on the NHS or privately
- make sure you know how much your NHS and/or private treatment will cost
- provide you with a written treatment plan (including costs) if you are receiving a mix of NHS and private care
- display a poster about NHS charges in the waiting room
- discuss with you how often you need to attend – if you have good oral health it's unlikely you will need a check up every six months
- provide a leaflet with information about the practice and the services available.

From 1 April 2006, your dentist will NOT:

- charge you for missed appointments – but if you continue to miss appointments they may decide not to offer you treatment
- accept children as NHS patients on condition that their parent, parents or guardian agree to sign up for private treatment.

You should:

- give your dentist as much notice as possible if you have to cancel or change an appointment
- request a written treatment plan (including costs) if you would like one
- ask for information on your treatment options and how much it will cost
- ask about your oral health and how often you NEED to go to the dentist
- follow your dentist's advice to prevent tooth decay and gum disease
- pay your bill promptly.

Useful contacts

To find a dentist

Contact your [PCT](#) – visit www.nhs.uk for contact details or check your local phone book.

Or, contact [NHS Direct](#) (go to NHS Direct Interactive on digital satellite TV, visit www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk or phone 0845 4647*).

Out-of-hours and urgent treatment

Contact your PCT or NHS Direct for information on out-of-hours and urgent treatment in your area.

Making a complaint

You should send a written letter to the person responsible for complaints at your dentist's practice.

You can gain support with making a complaint from:

NHS dental services – the complaints manager or Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) at your PCT, your local Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (ICAS), Citizens Advice or visit www.dh.gov.uk.

Private dental services – from May 2006, you can contact the General Dental Council on 020 7887 3800 or email complaints@gdc-uk.org.

Professional standards for dentists

The [General Dental Council](#) sets standards of conduct and regulates all dental professionals in the UK. Phone 020 7887 3800 or visit www.gdc-uk.org.

*Calls cost a maximum of 4 pence per minute from a BT landline. The cost of calls from mobiles and other networks may vary. Your service provider may charge a minimum cost per call. For patients' safety, all calls to NHS Direct are recorded.

Getting involved

Contact your local [Patient and Public Involvement Forum](#) to find out how you can help shape NHS dental services. Contact details are available from your PCT or the Commission for Patient and Public Involvement in Health on 0845 120 7111, or visit www.cppih.org.

Information and advice

[British Dental Health Foundation](#) – dental helpline 0845 063 1188 or www.dentalhealth.org.uk.

Your local [Patient Advice and Liaison Service](#) or visit www.pals.nhs.uk.

Your local [Citizens Advice Bureau](#) or visit www.citizensadvice.org.uk.

[Which?](#) (formerly the Consumers' Association) on 0845 307 4000, or visit www.which.co.uk.

NHS Fraud Reporting Line on 0800 028 4060.



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