

NHS dental treatment

How to find an NHS dentist

If you want NHS dental treatment, you first need to find out which dentists in your area provide NHS treatment. Then you need to find one who is accepting new patients.

You can do this by going to the NHS Choices website at www.nhs.uk and clicking on Dentists or call NHS 111. If you can't find an NHS dentist who is accepting new patients, NHS England will be able to tell you which dentist in your area currently accepts patients.

You don't need to register with a dentist in order to get NHS treatment but your dentist should keep a list of regular patients and provide ongoing treatment and care.

Some dentists do have contracts to only treat children on the NHS. However, they can't insist that they'll only treat your children on the NHS if you are taken on as a private patient. Under certain circumstances, your dentist may discontinue a course of treatment. This could happen, for example, if you don't cooperate with treatment or if you fail to turn up for lots of appointments. Where violence, or the threat of violence occurs, your dentist could discontinue treatment straight away, without any advance warning.

What treatment can you get on the NHS

You're entitled to any treatment which you need to maintain your dental health. This could include the fitting of crowns, bridges and dentures. The dentist will give you a **treatment plan** after your check-up if you ask for it, which will show you what you need and the cost. There are three standard charges for a course of NHS dental treatment, depending on the treatment needed. These should be displayed in your dentist's waiting room. Some things, such as denture repairs, are free.

More details about NHS dental fees are available on the NHS Choices website at www.nhs.uk.

Your dentist may offer to do part of the work on your treatment plan or additional treatment, privately. However, they should not pressure you into having treatment privately which is available on the NHS. If your dentist tries to do this, you should complain – see under Complaints.

Some treatment is not available on the NHS and can only be done privately, for example, white fillings in back teeth.

If you have been getting NHS treatment and need to start treatment for something that has to be done privately, you should be given a form to sign to say you agree to begin private treatment.

Who can get free NHS dental treatment

You can get free dental treatment (including check-ups) if you:

- are under 18
- are under 19 and in full-time education
- are pregnant
- have given birth in the last twelve months
- are getting Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, income-related Employment and Support Allowance or the guarantee credit part of Pension Credit
- Universal Credit.

Also, some people on a low income, including some people getting tax credits, can get free NHS dental treatment or treatment at a reduced cost. More details about help with dental costs can be found on the NHS Choices website at www.nhs.uk.

Can you change your dentist?

You can go to a different dentist at any time. You should let your dentist know and cancel any appointments. If you want to change dentists during a course of treatment, you may have to pay the first dentist for the treatment to date. It is always sensible to find a second dentist in advance who is prepared to complete a course of treatment already started by another dentist.

Can your dentist charge you for not keeping or cancelling an appointment?

A dentist is not entitled to charge you for cancelling an appointment. However, if you fail to turn up or cancel lots of appointments, they may decide not to treat you.

Emergency treatment

NHS England is responsible for commissioning out-of-hours emergency dental treatment. You will usually have to phone an emergency helpline first. If a decision is made that you need care or treatment out of hours, NHS England will make arrangements for this. There is a set fee for urgent and out-of-hours treatment.

Complaints about dentists

If you want to complain about your dentist, you should complain to your dental practice first. You can do this either by speaking to someone at the practice, or in writing. The dental practice must make a record of your complaint and look into it.

If you are not satisfied after this, you can appeal or refer the problem to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman.

You might also want to get help from your local Healthwatch service who can advise you about making a complaint. You can find details of your local Healthwatch on their website at www.healthwatch.co.uk.

Further help

Citizens Advice Bureau

Citizens Advice Bureaux give free, confidential, impartial and independent advice to help you solve problems. To find your nearest CAB, including those that give advice by e-mail, click on [nearest CAB](#), or look under C in your phone book.

Other information on Adviceguide which might help

- NHS patients' rights
- NHS dentist complaints
- NHS charges and optical voucher values
- How to use an ombudsman in England

This fact sheet is produced by [Citizens Advice](#), an operating name of The National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux. It is intended to provide general information only and should not be taken as a full statement of the law. The information applies to England only.

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