



Finding the right dentist

Dental care in the UK can be provided by the National Health Service (NHS) or by private dental practices.

NHS dentistry was originally intended to ensure that dental treatment was available to the whole population. Central government has however limited financial support for NHS dentistry for some time, struggling to cover 55% of the population in a one-year period. Unlike medical care, charges are made to most people. Currently, dentists act as private contractors to the NHS, which means the dentists buy/rent the building and equip the surgery, hire all the staff and pay all of the running costs, including wages, materials and insurances, to provide an NHS dental service. Within its three price brackets, the NHS offers core restorative dental treatments, such as crowns, bridges, fillings and dentures. There are limitations though. Cosmetic treatment like white fillings are only offered in some cases, while treatments such as veneers and implants are only available on the NHS under very exceptional circumstances.



In the private sector, dentists work without any NHS restrictions and are able to provide the full range of dental services to their patients, as well as quick and easy access to specialist

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dental care if required. The complete selection of clinical and cosmetic treatments is available, as well as dental implants for the replacement of missing teeth. Private dentists generally have access to a greater range of materials and equipment, which sit at the cutting edge of modern dentistry. There are no official guidelines for the cost of private treatment, and each practice sets its own fees, reflecting the level of care they wish to provide as well as the qualifications and expertise of their clinicians. Some practices may offer different ways to pay for treatment. You may pay at the end of a course of treatment or take out an insurance policy to cover the cost up to an agreed limit.

Whether you choose to attend an NHS or private dental practice, it is advisable to research the practice's reputation and the calibre of its clinicians. Having attended your first visit, discuss all treatment options available and ask for a written estimated cost for the proposed treatment.

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