

## NHS Dental Access - Frequently Asked Questions

### How do I find an NHS dentist for routine care?

- Patients are not registered with a dentist in the same way as GP practices – you can therefore contact any NHS practice to access care.
- We are aware that some practices are operating waiting lists to manage those patients requesting routine NHS dental care.
- As independent contractors, dental practices are responsible for managing their appointment books and are best placed to advise on the capacity they have available to take on new patients.
- Practices providing NHS treatment are listed on [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk). It is their responsibility to keep the information on this website updated and whilst it may currently indicate they are not taking on new patients, we would advise that patients do contact them to check the latest position on availability for routine appointments.
- It may be helpful for you to be aware that the North East and North Cumbria ICB does not hold information on practices currently accepting new patients and is therefore not in a position to advise on appointment availability.

### I have joined a local NHS dentist waiting list, how long will I wait and how will I be contacted?

- Individual dental practices will be able to provide information to you on how their waiting lists are managed and how individuals will be contacted including anticipated timeframes.
- While we appreciate that this can be frustrating, we ask that wherever possible, individuals do not assign themselves or their family members onto waiting lists at multiple dental practices.

## **I have an NHS dentist but been told it is a few months wait for my NHS treatment, but I have been given the option of having the treatment privately and this will be quicker – why is this?**

- NHS England and the ICB's expectation is that all NHS funded capacity is used to deliver the maximum possible volume of safe care for patients and we are supporting providers with this approach.
- Many practices offer both NHS and private treatment.
- Mixed NHS and private practices will have separate appointment books for both NHS and private treatment, with staff teams employed for these different arrangements.
- NHS provision is delivered across their contracted opening hours, however, demand for NHS treatment is such that they could have used up their available NHS appointments and the practice may, therefore, offer the private option to patients.

## **What will be the cost and difference between private and NHS dental treatment?**

- Before any treatment is started there will be a personal dental plan to sign which will explain the NHS treatment the dentist is going to do and how much it will cost. If any private treatment has been discussed this and the cost will also be listed separately.
- Please be aware that the NHS will provide all treatment that the NHS dentist feels is clinically necessary to keep teeth, gums, and mouth healthy. [Here](#) are the details on who is entitled to free NHS treatment and also what [types of treatments](#) are available on the NHS and the cost.

## **I don't have a regular dentist, but I have now developed an urgent dental issue – what should I do?**

- If you develop an urgent dental issue, you can telephone any NHS dental practice during normal working hours. Practices providing NHS treatment are listed on [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk).
- It is important that when you ring the practice, you fully explain the nature of your dental problem so that the urgency of your dental treatment can be determined.

- If the practice is unable to offer an appointment because their NHS urgent access slots have already been taken up, they will advise you to ring another NHS dental practice or alternatively visit [www.111.nhs.uk](http://www.111.nhs.uk) or call 111.
- The NHS111 health advisor will undertake a clinical triage and where the dental need is deemed to be clinically urgent, an appointment will be made at the nearest in-hours urgent dental care hub, or alternatively depending on the time of the call, into the dental out of hours treatment services.
- If the issue is not deemed urgent, patients will be signposted to another NHS dental practice and/or given self-care advice until an appointment can be offered.

**My regular dentist has closed or has gone fully private, and I have been advised that I will have to sign up to a private dental plan to access dental care which I can't afford, what do I do?**

- We appreciate that the loss of any dental practice will be a concern for patients and local communities.
- Where this occurs, we are committed to exploring all opportunities to address any gaps in provision as quickly as possible.
- It is important to note that patients are not registered with a dentist in the same way they are with a General Practitioner (Doctor) – patients can contact any NHS practices to access care.
- [Here](#) are the details on who is entitled to free NHS treatment and also what [types of treatments](#) are available on the NHS and the cost.

**What other general advice can you give to help me look after and protect my teeth?**

- If your teeth and gums are healthy – a check-up, or scale and polish may not be needed every 6 months.
- Stopping smoking and limiting alcohol intake along with reducing the amount of sugary drinks and food can all be beneficial in keeping your teeth and gums healthy.
- All NHS dental practices are being encouraged to prioritise patients for treatment based on urgency and priority groups, such as those more at risk of dental disease or children.

- Appointments for some routine treatments, such as dental check-ups, may still be delayed.
- If you develop an urgent dental issue telephone your regular dental practice (or any NHS dental practice if you don't have a regular dentist) for advice on what to do next or visit [www.111.nhs.uk](http://www.111.nhs.uk).
- If the dentist decides the issue is not urgent, you may be given advice on how to self-manage the dental problem until an appointment becomes available. You will be advised to make contact again if your situation changes/worsens.

## **Out of hours dental care**

- Toothache should initially be managed with over-the-counter pain relief until an appointment can be made with a general dental practice. A pharmacist can advise you what is the best pain control to meet your needs.
- Lost fillings, crowns or bridges, broken teeth or braces are not usually deemed to be clinically urgent and patients are advised to contact their local dental practice when they re-open.
- Only ring NHS 111 out of hours when your dental needs cannot be met by self-care and cannot wait until your regular practice – if you have one - is open to contact them for advice.