

Whyman House Dental Practice – Patient Fees in the COVID-19 Era

The practice of dentistry has fundamentally changed owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst we are confident that things will return to some semblance of normality over the coming months, we thought it would be transparent to explain our approach to our increased costs.

There are 3 fundamental areas where our operating costs will increase significantly. There are:

1. The increased cost of standard Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). As an example; the standard facemasks that we use in dentistry used to cost us around £2.95 + VAT for a box of 50. Those same masks now cost over £40, an increase of over 1000%. Similar % increases apply to other related items
2. The requirement to use additional PPE for certain procedures.
3. The requirement to leave the dental surgery empty for a period of time, following certain procedures, up to an hour, in some cases.

The key area of treatments which have been affected are the so called 'Aerosol Generating Procedures' (AGPs). These are procedures which produce a fine water spray. Examples of which are using the dental drill with water and the ultrasonic scaler, which is used for cleaning teeth. This aerosol, when combined with a virus is a potential method for infecting other people. To reduce this risk, enhanced levels of PPE must be worn by the Dental Team when performing AGPs. At the end of the procedure the dental surgery must be left empty for a period of time. This is to allow any aerosol to settle on the surfaces, which can then be disinfected, in order to prevent cross- contamination. We will absorb the cost of this empty surgery time. The cost of the additional PPE for AGPs is around £30 per appointment (2 sets of masks, visors, gowns for Dentist/Hygienist and Nurse).

Treatments That Will Cost the Same as Before

From the time we re-open we will **not** make any additional charges for standard PPE for procedures that do not generate an aerosol. Examples of these are check-ups, x-rays, temporary fillings and simple extractions. We will absorb that additional cost. Charges for these treatments will therefore be as before.

Treatments That will Currently Incur an Additional Charge

We regret we will need to make a charge of **around £30 per appointment**, in addition to normal treatment fees, for the enhanced PPE required for AGPs. These are all the procedures that involve using a drill. Examples of these are fillings, root fillings, difficult extractions and treatment to relieve toothache. They also include the use of the ultrasonic scaler for tooth cleaning.

We will always discuss this additional cost with you before any appointment. We would hope that the requirement for this enhanced PPE will disappear as the risks associated with the COVID-19 pandemic lessen. When this happens, the charge will no longer apply. Patients also have the option of delaying treatment until after the requirement for enhanced PPE has passed. There is no timescale for this at present and delaying dental treatment may result in a less favourable outcome.