

Lushington Road Dental Practice

Practice Fees & Payments Policy 2019

Amended June 8th 2020

Ensuring the prompt collection of fees is crucial to maintaining cash flow and keeping the practice operational. All members of the dental team are responsible for ensuring that patients are fully informed about the fees that they are likely to pay and when those payments will be due.

This policy describes the practice procedure for advising patients of the fees payable for their dental care and for collecting payments.

Information on fees

1. We commit to provide full information about costs to patients at every stage of their care.
2. Information about fees is displayed in the practice leaflet and on the website, also displayed in reception waiting area. A copy of the information is available on request.
3. Information on patient charges and an indicative price list are provided to new patients with their welcome letter. The practice information leaflet also describes how patients can pay for their care.

Estimates & bills

4. Before any treatment is undertaken, the options available and the associated costs are explained in full to the patient in a way that the patient understands. Changes due to COVID-19 mean that we are trying to reduce contact at reception, hence we will take deposits and full pre-payments where possible to ensure minimal contact.
5. A written treatment plan and estimate of costs are provided for all dental treatment.
6. Patients should be given an itemised bill. The patient's record should include details of any fees incurred and payments made; it should be checked at each visit and should include details of any outstanding amounts.

Deposits & cancellation notice periods/fees

7. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, new payment policies have had to be enforced due to clinical time being extremely precious, surging costs and limited appointments being available due to new government enforced guidelines meaning fallow time after all appointments. This means that we are now requesting that patients make full pre-payment for all appointments – unless a patient is exempt from payment or on a dental plan that covers the costs of their treatment/s.

8. Deposits are required for all appointments, and the minimum amount patients will be asked to pay is 50% of their full appointment cost; this includes hygiene appointments.
9. New patient consultations, unregistered emergency consultations, and appointments with the specialist team (Dr John Tighe & Natalie Woodlock) are to be paid in full at the time of booking in order to secure the appointment.
10. Deposits are non-refundable if you fail to attend your appointment or do not give the requested cancellation notice period.
11. We ask patients to give 24 hours notice to cancel an appointment; for appointments one hour or longer, or with the specialist team, the notice period is seven days. If these notice periods are not given, patients are made aware that they may be charged. Charges usually equate to 50% of the full cancelled appointment fee. This is explained at the time of booking an appointment, and is documented at the bottom of signed estimates and appointment cards if the patient has been provided one.
12. If a patient does have to cancel an appointment at short notice, we will try our best to fill the clinical time. If filled, a patient charge may be waived in relation to the amount of time filled. If the whole appointment has been filled, a patient will not be charged.
13. If a patient fails to attend an appointment, the full appointment cost will be charged. Exceptional circumstances for failing to attend an appointment or for cancelling an appointment at short notice may be considered at the discretion of management.

Payments

14. The practice offers patients a range of payment options, including payment by cash and credit/debit card (not Amex, Solo or Visa Electron) or via monthly instalments to Denplan.
15. Our policy is to request patients pay a deposit towards every appointment of at least 50% of the full appointment cost – this is payable at the time of booking. Full payment is requested, if possible, again to minimise patient contact at reception during the COVID-19 pandemic. Patients are reminded about our payment policy when making an appointment, and this policy is also documented at the bottom of signed estimates and appointment cards if patients have been provided with one.
16. For longer and more complex courses of treatment, patients may be offered the option to pay for their treatment by instalments. This must be agreed in full by Anjali Patel. If a patient has a complaint about a credit arrangement, the practice complaints procedure should be followed. If the complaint cannot be resolved in this way, the patient should be advised of their right to take the matter to the Financial Ombudsman Service.
17. Whenever a payment is taken, the patient must be given a full itemised and dated receipt.
18. If a patient offers to pay part of the full cost, the part payment should be accepted but the patient must be advised that the amount paid is not accepted as full-and-final settlement. The patient should be given a statement showing the original

invoice amount and date, the date and amount of part-payment, and the amount still outstanding.

Outstanding payments

19. A regular check of the treatments provided against the payments received is undertaken by Anjali Patel and reminders sent to patients who have missed payments.
20. If no payment is received within four weeks, a reminder will be sent inviting the patient to contact the practice regarding payment options.
21. If, following the second reminder, no payment is received, a final reminder letter will be sent and the patient advised that further failure to make payment may result in the practice instructing a debt collection agency or taking legal proceedings. Details of the agency will be provided to ensure that the patient knows who may contact them at a later date.
22. If, following the final reminder, no payment is received, Anjali Patel will consider how to progress the matter. Action may include engagement of a reputable debt collection agency or formal legal action. In extreme circumstances and at the sole discretion of Anjali Patel the debt may be written off.
23. The patient will be informed that, for the purposes of collecting the debt, their details may be passed to a third party.