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Great Answers to Tough Patient Questions

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Treatment Concerns

Would you have this treatment if you were me?

That's a really good question. The doctor would never recommend a treatment he wouldn't want for himself or a member of his family. In fact, my nephew had a very similar procedure, and it came out great. But this treatment is for you. (Talk about the excellence of a particular treatment recommendation for a patient's unique dental situation.)

You know, I could just get this tooth pulled. That would be cheaper than a crown, right?

That's one treatment option to consider. What do you think of it? You're not sure? Well, let's talk about exactly what the two treatments would mean for you. In the short term, the crown is a larger investment. But for that investment, you receive a tooth that can improve your smile, feel natural and comfortable, and protect the spacing and function of the rest of the teeth in your mouth. I've talked with patients who have chosen to have a tooth extracted, and down the line they realize they have to replace it. They don't like the way their smile looks or the fact that their remaining teeth have worn down. Every single patient decided that extraction was no bargain.

Do I really need the treatment the doctor recommended?

So you were wondering if you need to go ahead with treatment when you don't have any pain? I can understand that. By the time a tooth hurts, it's usually too late to save it with a filling. Patients in that situation face more extensive treatment, as well as the risk of infection and discomfort. Treatment now will protect your tooth in a comfortable, affordable way. Plus I think you will like the way it looks.

Why fill baby teeth when they fall out anyway?

While it is true that baby teeth do eventually come out, it is also true that they are important to your child in the meantime. Tony needs his baby teeth to speak clearly, eat comfortably and smile with self-confidence. Also, his baby teeth are holding space for his permanent teeth. If one is lost, the others shift into the empty space. This often means a crooked smile in a child's future. An investment in treatment now will save Tony from dental problems down the road, including possible infection and discomfort."

I'm worried it's going to really hurt.

I wish I could tell you that you will feel nothing during this treatment. Each person has their own level of sensation in their mouth. Some patients find it completely comfortable; others feel some discomfort. Here's how we can make the procedure as comfortable as possible.

I don't want any x-rays. I've had too many in my life already.

Of course you don't want any x-rays you don't absolutely need. We agree, and that's why we take only those necessary to assess your oral health and protect you from potentially serious health conditions. X-rays are essential to the early detection and treatment of not just cavities, but such serious health conditions as bone infections and oral cancer. If you look here on this x-ray, I can show you what I'm talking about.

Do you guarantee your work?

When you are making this kind of investment, that's a reasonable question. Many of the crowns the doctor has provided to patients have lasted a lifetime; some have not. What this practice can guarantee is: You will receive the exact right crown for your needs with the finest materials from an excellent dental laboratory. You will find out everything you need to know about taking care of your new crown. But what we can NOT guarantee is precisely how long the crown will last. The difference between a crown that lasts forever and one that doesn't is the person who takes care of it a day at a time.

Finance Questions

How do you set your fees?

To obtain the quality of service you deserve, your investment is based upon our care, skill and judgment and the time necessary to provide the service. Regarding your recommended treatment in particular, here's a copy of the written treatment plan with a fee noted for each service. Let's go over it together.

I saw the doctor's new car. You must be doing really well.

Thank you, we are, actually. Our patients have been dedicated about going ahead with the care they need and have been kind enough to refer their friends and family to us. We feel lucky to serve such fantastic people in our community.

I bet I could find it cheaper elsewhere.

We want you to be comfortable with our fees, and if comparing fees will make you more comfortable, then you should certainly do so. I would urge you, though, not to make a decision about a dental office based solely on price. Quality, comfort, convenience and continuity of care are all important too. I shop at Walmart and hit garage sales, but when it comes to dental care, I go for the best.

I'm calling around for prices. How much is a filling?

I'll be happy to give you a range. Our fees on file for fillings range from (lowest fee) to (highest fee). That's a big range, isn't it? There are many different types of fillings, since each one is designed to meet the unique dental needs of the patient. Only the doctor can determine the type of filling that is exactly right for you after a careful examination. Please feel free to call other offices for costs, but as you do, I urge you not to make your decision solely on the basis of price.

Please bill my child's jerk of a father for the treatment.

I wish we could. We have found ourselves in this triangle situation before, and have found the best way to handle it is to ask the parent who brings the child in to cover the costs of the visit.

Thirty years ago a filling cost one-third that much.

There's no question that everything costs more these days. The fee increases in dentistry are about the same as increases in other goods and services, from cars and mortgages to groceries and dry cleaning. They have simply kept pace with inflation. I like to think that because we have had phenomenal advancements in our materials and techniques, we offer more to patients dollar-for-dollar than ever before. For example, thirty years ago, you would not have had the choice of a filling that is virtually invisible.

I have insurance. Why do I have a bill?

You have every reason to be concerned when it seems as if you are not getting the type of dental benefits you deserve. We have consistent fees for our services, but the many insurance companies out there vary in their payments. Some pay for dental care in full; some do not. We help you file your insurance claims to get the most benefits possible; you are then responsible for the remainder of the fee. If you're unhappy with your dental insurance, you might want to talk to your union steward about why they chose a plan that doesn't cover the full fee for this treatment.

I really like it here, but I'll get a discount if I switch to a dentist on this list.

Thank you! We're glad you are happy here. We value you as a patient. But how do you decide if switching is best for your family and your budget? Please consider these aspects in your decision. First, what does the fine print say on the insurance agreement? Do you know exactly what is covered and what isn't? Second, how convenient are the doctors on the list? Will they provide the care you have come to expect and value? Third, how will your family react to switching to a different dental practice? We will support your decision. But if you decide to switch and you aren't happy, we would certainly welcome you back.