

10 Ways To Save On Your Dental Bills

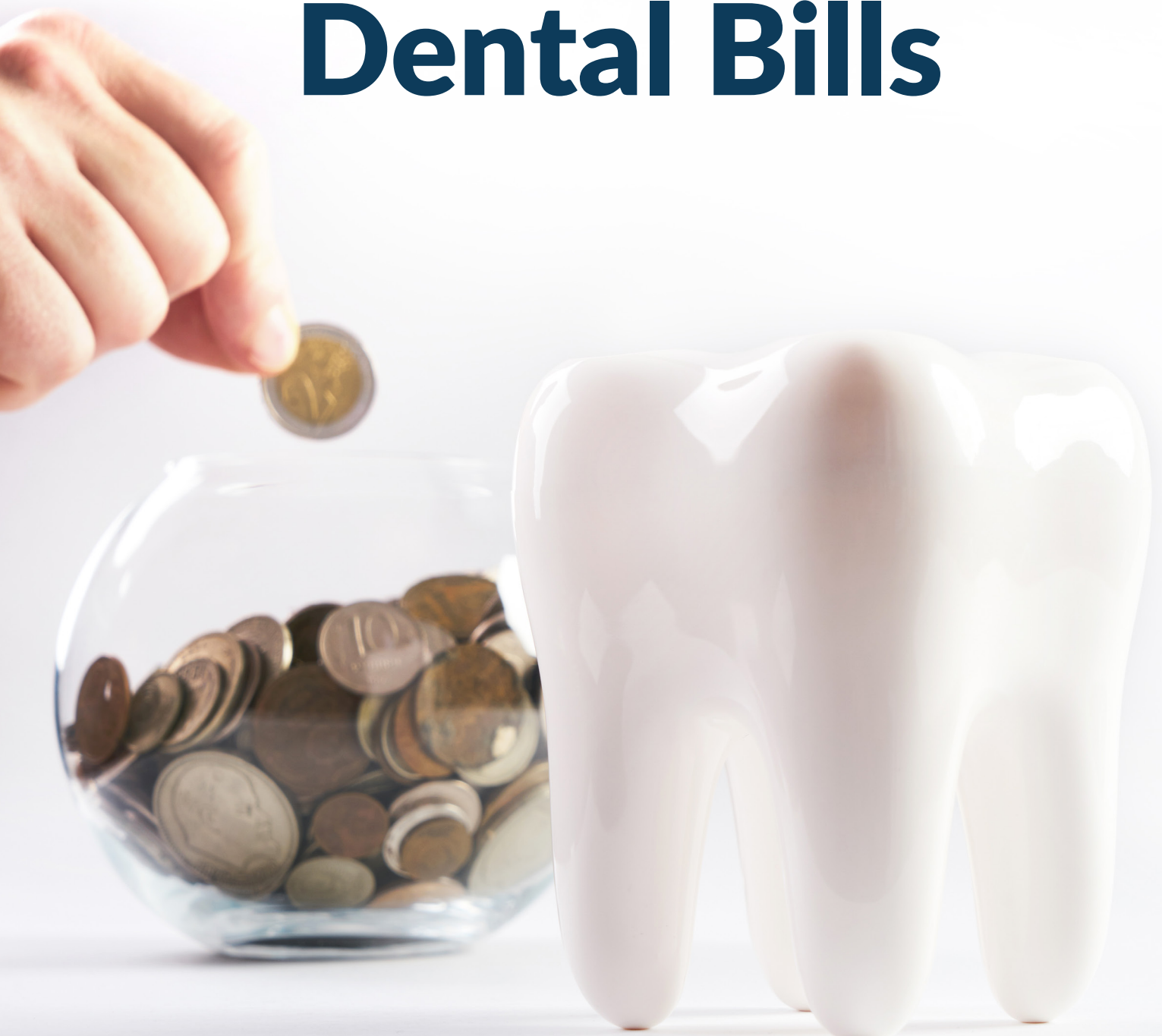


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Introduction

Taking proactive measures with dental care is much easier and significantly less costly than coping with dental complications once they occur.

Although we tend to treat dental care as something separate from medical care, there is a connection between your oral health and your overall health. Untreated oral disease (essentially a bacterial infection) can spread to the rest of the body under certain conditions, at which point it's not only more costly to treat, it may be life-threatening! Likewise, illness elsewhere in the body can have harmful effects in your mouth.

In this guide, we explain how to avoid major problems and expenses by being proactive with your dental care and by recognizing the early warning signs associated with the most common dental problems then taking quick action to treat and resolve them as needed. We hope you find these tips easy to implement and as helpful to you as they have been to many of our patients.

**“Regular dental care
can prevent the need for
more costly dental
procedures in the future.”**



10 Ways To Save On Your Dental Bills

1 Brushing

You probably know that brushing removes particles of food stuck to or trapped around and between your teeth. Did you know it also does a good job of removing deposits of material you can't see—bacteria that naturally live in the human mouth? It's the buildup of that bacteria—commonly known as plaque—that leads to some of the most expensive dental problems!

Look at your teeth in a magnifying mirror sometime after a day of not brushing or flossing. You may notice a whitish film especially at the gum line. That's a buildup of bacteria that feed on food particles left in your mouth and then multiply. Initially it is relatively soft, though sticky, and can be dislodged with regular brushing and flossing. If not removed within about 26 hours, it becomes hardened tartar (also called calculus), which can only be removed with a professional cleaning.

As these bacteria digest food particles, they produce a strong acid that can eat through tooth enamel—the hardest substance in the human body! This is how a cavity starts.

How to Brush: The motion and pressure required is minimal. Brushing too vigorously can actually damage gum tissues. Place the toothbrush (we recommend one with soft rounded bristles) in your mouth, with the bristles at an angle toward your gum line. Start at the back and move the brush softly in a circular motion. Count to 10 and move to the next group of teeth. Both the inside and outside surfaces of your teeth should be cleaned this way. Clean the top surfaces of your back teeth with a back-and-forth motion. Ask your hygienist to review the technique with you. And don't forget to brush your tongue; bacteria like to settle there, too.

When & How Often to Brush: Plaque begins forming 4 to 12 hours after brushing. That's why it's important to brush and floss, at least twice a day—once in the morning and once at night. We suggest adding a midday brushing as well.

Manual vs Powered: Studies show that people tend to clean their teeth better with an electric toothbrush than with a regular one. Studies show that using an electric toothbrush can reduce plaque build up by 10 to 20%. But it's not so much the brush as the hand that holds it! Used regularly and properly, either one will do the job effectively.

Other Considerations: A soft-bristled brush (or brush head if you use a powered model) is best for removing debris and plaque from your teeth. If you have a smaller mouth, small-headed brushes are also preferable, since they can better reach all areas of the mouth such as back teeth. You should replace your toothbrush when it begins to show wear, or every 3 months, whichever comes first.

2 Flossing

While most people brush regularly, far fewer floss consistently—or at all. But flossing is just as important as brushing because floss gets places where toothbrush bristles can't or aren't as effective, like between teeth and at the gumline. The type of floss you use—thick or thin, waxed or unwaxed, rounded or flat, flavored or unflavored—is a personal preference. Any is effective when used accurately and regularly.

Technique: Wind 18 inches of floss around the middle fingers of each hand, leaving about 5 inches in between. Pinch the floss between your thumbs and index fingers and leave about one inch to work with. Gently, guide the floss down between the teeth, pull it into a C shape around the sides of a tooth, and gently slide it under the gumline.

Other Devices: Toothpicks can be useful in a pinch for dislodging food residue trapped between teeth, but they are not an alternative to flossing. In fact, they can damage gums and teeth when used too forcefully. A water pick (oral irrigator) that aims a stream of water at teeth and gums can help remove food particles, but it is generally not considered a substitute for flossing either.



3 Remineralize

Tooth enamel, the hardest substance in the body, covers and protects the much softer tooth dentin below. Tooth pain occurs when the dentin becomes damaged, which is much softer and can refer pain signals to the tooth nerve. That's why a cavity (bacteria that has eaten through the enamel layer) or a chip that exposes the inner tooth can be so uncomfortable. If the bacterial infection reaches the tooth nerve or pulp, it can cause irreversible damage to the tooth leading to the need of a root canal treatment or tooth removal. Prevention costs a lot less than a root canal procedure to save the tooth or a tooth replacement.

Once enamel is destroyed, it does not grow back. It is made up mostly of tightly bonded minerals like calcium and phosphate. But acids, in food/beverages and the acids produced by oral bacteria naturally found in the mouth, break down the minerals creating the bond and erode the enamel—a process called demineralization.

Natural Remineralization: Your body's own defense for demineralization is saliva. It contains minerals that neutralize acids and restore weakened bonds in the enamel within 30 to 60 minutes after eating . So having dry mouth is not only uncomfortable, it's bad for your oral health. Talk to your dental hygienist about what to do if you have a dry mouth.

Calgary tap water does not contain fluoride: Fluoride is the best defense when it comes to hardening your tooth enamel. In some municipalities, it is added to the public water supply in small doses. Toothpastes and rinses containing fluoride and other essential minerals as well as professional fluoride treatments are other options for fortifying your enamel. Chewing sugarless gum can also increase saliva flow, potentially speeding up remineralization.

4 Sealants

The grooves and crevices on the chewing surfaces of back teeth are great places for food particles and bacteria to hide. It's difficult to clean there, even with the best home care , making these areas prone to early cavity development. That makes them popular spots for cavities to develop. A tooth colour sealant that your dentist can apply provides added protection by filling these tiny crevices and preventing plaque from accumulating there. With a sealant and good oral hygiene, the risk of getting a cavity drops considerably. Sealants are typically recommended for children when the permanent back teeth erupt.





5 Professional Exam and Cleaning

Many dental problems are not obvious to the naked eye in the beginning, and they generally don't start with discomfort or pain either. By having routine dental checkups and professional cleanings, you can catch problems in their earliest stages when they're easiest—and least costly—to treat.

No matter how careful you are about your brushing and flossing, plaque can be missed. This layer of plaque hardens into tartar in about 26 hours, at which point only your dental hygienist can remove it using special instruments. Bacteria in plaque and tartar can irritate and damage your gums (gingiva), causing gingivitis, the first stage of gum disease. It's characterized by slight swelling and/or redness around the gumline, and gums may bleed when you brush or floss. Untreated, gingivitis progresses to periodontal disease, which is much more serious healthwise and considerably more costly to address. Untreated periodontal disease eventually leads to tooth loss.

6 Insurance: What To Expect/ How To Maximize

Dental insurance can be confusing, and misconceptions about coverage can interfere with getting the most from your plan. Seek assistance from your dental team. At Sandstone Dental, we work with patients to help clarify their benefits, communicate with their dental insurance carrier on their behalf, and assist with completing and submitting their insurance claims.

Most plans have yearly maximums with a December 31 cut-off date. So if you have not had any treatment during the year, it is cost-effective to complete outstanding treatment before year's end. That way you'll have a fresh start the next year in case some other unexpected problem shows up.

Personal Insurance: Our patients occasionally ask us whether they should buy personal or individual insurance. Our answer is usually NO. Personal insurance plans are always structured in such a way that you get less out of them than you put in. The only exception is self-administered plans such as a health spending account. In this type of arrangement, you put money in and draw on it as you pay for dentistry.

You actually pay MORE than the cost of the dentistry, but only about 8%. In some cases, personal insurance is a tax-deductible expense. Check with your tax adviser when considering this option.

7 Your Dietary Habits

Sugars in your diet are be the most important dietary factor contributing to tooth decay. Foods and beverages with added sugars increase the risk for decay, especially starchy, high-carbohydrate foods that break down into sugars like snack cakes and breakfast cereal. Meanwhile, acidic foods and beverages like soft drinks or coffee can erode tooth enamel.

It's not always possible, or desirable, to eliminate potentially problematic foods and beverages altogether from your diet, but try to limit your consumption. It's also important to give your saliva time to neutralize acids and remineralize, which means no persistent snacking or continuous sipping on sugary or acidic drinks. Not surprisingly, a diet that is nutritious and healthy for your body, is better for your teeth, too.

8 Other Habits

Using your teeth for unintended purposes may cause them to wear down faster or to develop microscopic fractures leading to chipping or breakage of your teeth. Nail biting, chewing on or clenching “foreign objects” like pencils between your teeth, and opening things with your teeth...Consider them all taboo!

9 Your Overall Wellness

Certain chronic diseases not typically linked to your mouth can cause problems for teeth and gums—diabetes and heart disease, for example. Recognizing the risks allows you to act pre-emptively to avoid those problems. What you spend on implementing simple preventive measures will often be less than the cost of subsequent treatment. Check with your dentist/dental hygienist or the physician treating your condition to learn the risks and what you can do about them.

10 Find A Good Dentist

A good dentist can save you money by providing the dental care you need now, helping prevent the need for more costly dental treatment in the future.

You need to find someone you feel comfortable with. Someone who listens and tries to understand you. Someone who takes all of your issues into account. Someone who actually gives you options.

Asking around is always a great way to start. See who your friends recommend.

A large practice only gets that way by keeping a lot of people happy for a long period of time so that is a good sign.

Dentists in a group practice like Sandstone Dental have the ability to consult with each other. The patient benefits from the combined knowledge of the multiple dentists.



Summary

If you had one car to last your WHOLE LIFE, how would you maintain it? You'd keep it clean, protect it from rust, change the oil regularly, keep the tires properly inflated... If it needed minor repairs to prevent more serious ones you'd do them. If something broke, you'd fix it with the longest-lasting solution so you wouldn't have to fix it again for a long time (or ever). You'd also want a great mechanic—someone whose skills you trust, who patiently explains when you have questions, and who can point out potential problems early so you can deal with them before they become major, costly headaches.

This is how you should view your dental health: a life-long asset that needs your life-long tender loving care!

**Your Smile Is a
Prized Possession...
Keep It Healthy**





Sandstone Dental

Perfecting One Smile at a Time



Dr. Ashish Oommen



Dr. Peter Manzer



Dr. Rod Tajziehchi

HOURS

Monday	7:30 am to 5:00 pm
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