

Love Your Smile :)

Tips and tricks to help families
afford braces on any budget!



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WELCOME!



From Dr. T and Dr. Shah:

As parents ourselves in the communities we serve, we know life is crazy busy and getting reliable, honest information quickly can be tough. When speaking to parents, we found that the orthodontic plans to get a great smile were clear, but many questions came up with how to finance orthodontic treatment.

We've been fortunate to have hundreds of families trust our conservative approach to determine what treatment, if any at all, is appropriate to give their kids a winning smile, how it can fit into their busy schedules, and how to make it easily affordable! We pride ourselves in personalizing the braces experience as well as customizing the financing to fit into anyone's budget!

We want to empower our parents with information and thought the easiest way to convey answers to common questions about orthodontic finances would be to simply write it down in this guide entitled **"Free Your Smile!"**

With this guide, you will learn how to:

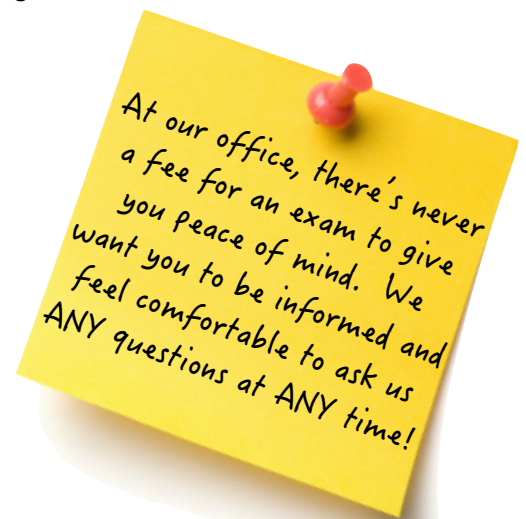
- **Pre-plan a budget to alleviate financial stress**
- **Use FSA/HSA to maximize your tax deductions and offset braces**
- **Recognize 6 common misconceptions about dental "insurance"**

We hope this guide will help you realize that getting a great smile is possible and that we will do whatever it takes to make sure it can happen for you!

All our best for a lifetime of happiness, fun, and awesome smiles!

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Orthodontic Specialists, University Faculty, Lecturers, Published Authors, Dads, and All-Around Nice Guys .)

P.S. If, after reading this book, you still have questions about orthodontic treatment or financing, feel free to give us a call at 609-799-4628 or schedule an appointment via our website (www.coesmiles.com). All orthodontic examinations at our office are always COMPLIMENTARY.



Find a Budget That Works For YOU!

Our goal at COE is make 100% sure finances don't stand in the way of getting a great smile and allowing our patients' lives to shine! However, we always hear that one of the biggest concerns families have with starting orthodontic treatment at other offices is fitting it into their monthly budget. That will never be an issue at COE.

We will happily work with you to make sure braces or Invisalign easily fits into your life, but we need your help as well! You will learn through reading this guide that there is typically a portion of orthodontic treatment that will not be covered by dental insurance benefits or other means. Therefore, our office will always work with you to break down that remaining portion into installments (interest-free!), spread these costs over the course of treatment, and minimize the impact to your family's budget.

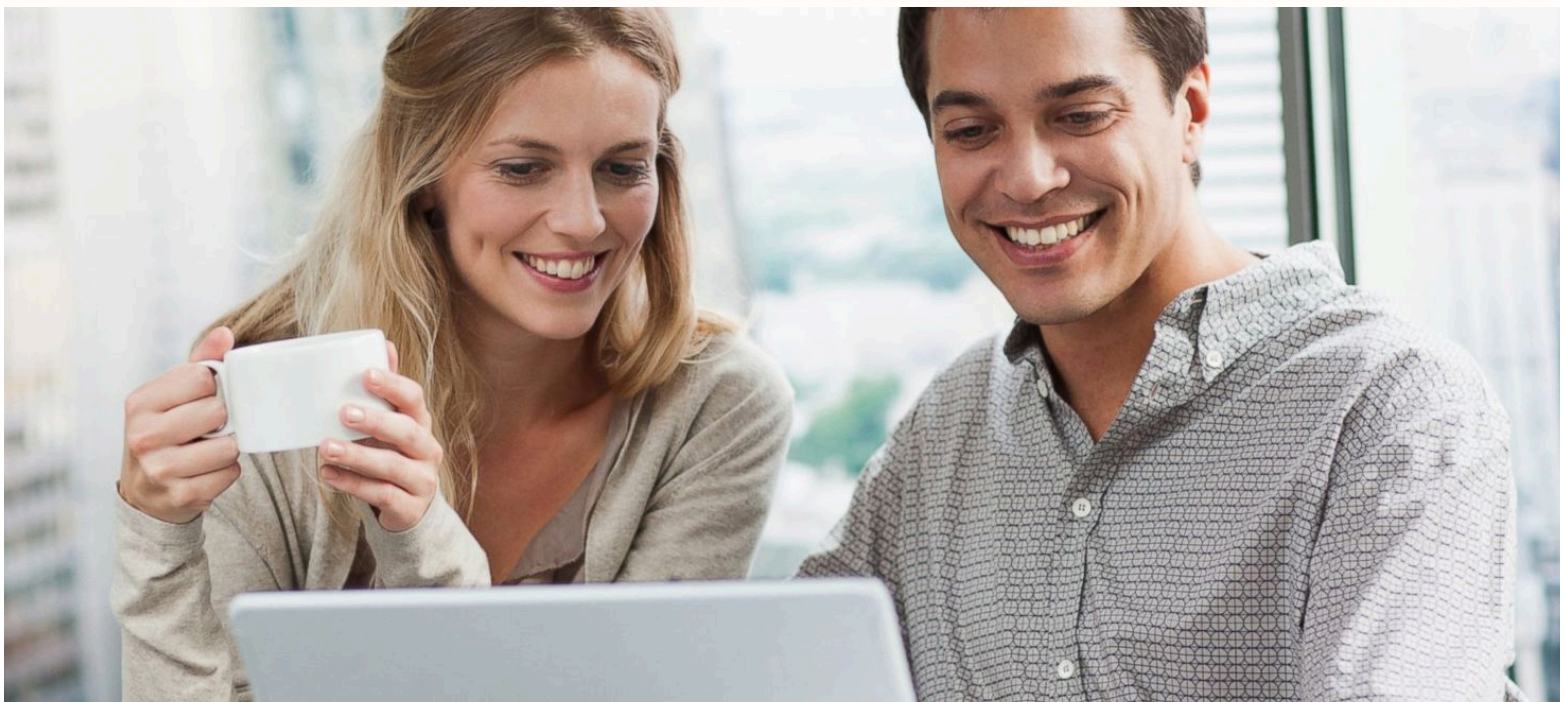
One thing that can really help the process is for you to have a family discussion about what ballpark monthly payment you would feel comfortable affording BEFORE you even come into the office.

For some families, this could be \$500/month, and for others maybe \$150-\$200/month might fit better. It does not matter what your comfortable monthly number is, but we want to make sure we are doing everything possible to work within it to help you get the smile you want!

Therefore, speaking with your spouse or working through your monthly finances yourself prior to visiting our office will help us tailor a plan that fits your needs and gets you smiling as easily as possible!



Our goal is to
NEVER have
finances get in the
way of getting a
great smile!



Take Advantage of Flex Spending/Health Savings Accounts (FSA/HSA)!

Flex Spending Accounts (FSA) or Health Savings Accounts (HSA) are fantastic ways to offset the costs of orthodontic treatment as well as help you reduce your tax burden for the year and should be utilized to the fullest extent possible when they are available for your family! Many programs allow for significant pre-tax contributions of \$1000, \$2500, or even \$5000, as long as you start with enough planning.

Since the FSA/HSA can be used for any portion of orthodontic treatment you need to take advantage of this to get the added tax benefit. **However, the one catch with FSAs is that you have to use any money that is placed in this account by the year end, or you LOSE it.** Yes, that's terrible, but unfortunately, it's the law and there is no way to pull money out for non-medical needs. Funds placed in HSA accounts can rollover to the following year, so be sure you know which type of savings plan you have!

- ***FSA/HSA plans give significant tax savings***
- ***Plan strategically to make sure you have funds to cover your expenses***
- ***Don't over-fund the account if you don't think you'll need it***
- ***You only have one chance per year to enroll, so pre-planning is critical***

The COE team can help you determine both if orthodontic treatment is going to be indicated to start in the upcoming year and help you determine how much and when you should sign up. Additionally, we will creatively give you some tips and tricks to maximize your FSA/HSA funds to going forward to help with your family's orthodontic care.

**FLEX YOUR
BUDGET
MUSCLES!**



Six Common Insurance Misconceptions!

If you are fortunate to have a dental benefits plan (also known as dental “insurance”) this is a wonderful way to help offset orthodontic costs! However, unlike medical insurance, dental benefits for orthodontics are NOT “insurance” in the sense that it protects you from financial hardship in the event of a catastrophe. Additionally, dental benefits policies are separate from any medical benefits you may have.

Instead of covering you for an unanticipated prolonged medical illness, home loss from fire, or similar circumstances orthodontic, dental benefits are simply an amount of money that the insurance company will provide for you to use towards orthodontic treatment if they are a part of your policy. Typically this amounts ranges from \$1000-2000, depending on the policy you or your employer have chosen for your family.

We find that many patients are not aware of how dental benefits work, and it definitely can be confusing! However, it's important for you to check out your own plan so there are no surprises and you can become better informed when choosing coverage for your family!

Here are six common misunderstandings we hear people have on a daily basis, so we hope this helps you better understand your policy!



1. Orthodontic benefits are a lifetime amount per person

Once it is used, provided you keep the same policy, no benefit remains and it does not reset on a yearly basis or get refreshed. Your yearly premium that you pay for the policy will remain the same even after the orthodontic benefit is used.



Six Common Insurance Misconceptions!

2. Most plans will set limits on coverage

Take a look at your plan carefully! Using language, such as 50% coverage up to \$1500 means that they will cover orthodontic treatment at 50% of the submitted fee, but only reimburse a maximum of \$1500 with the balance to be out-of-pocket. Let's consider a few examples:

If the total cost of treatment is \$6000, the company will provide the full \$1500 towards offsetting this cost (50% of \$6000 is \$3000, and they will provide the full \$1500 of coverage. Then the remaining \$4500 will be out-of-pocket).

However, if the total cost of treatment is \$2000, the company will only provide \$1000 of coverage (because this is 50%, with the other \$1000 being out-of-pocket). \$500 of benefit will then remain for another procedure on another date.

It's important to know your limits of coverage as well as any benefits that remain. Coverage is not specific to one office or a provider, so if you move and have to switch providers, your limits do not reset!



Six Common Insurance Misconceptions!

3. Many dental assistance programs for children require a pre-qualification to actually use the benefits you are paying for!

This qualification is a subjective evaluation by an insurance company employee who has never actually seen your child to determine if the patient “qualifies” to use the benefits. This is based on a “score” with point values given to various aspects of the bite.

Many times, these programs will say the child’s dental issues are not severe enough or “medically necessary” so they will not provide coverage. **THIS DOES NOT MEAN YOUR CHILD WOULDN’T BENEFIT FROM ORTHODONTIC TREATMENT.** It only means the program will not contribute to offsetting the costs, *even though you may have paid for the benefit.*

This is a common issue that frustrates many parents, and understandably so, but this decision is ultimately up to the company providing the benefits and the evaluator who has never actually seen your child, NOT you or your child’s orthodontic provider.

While it is unfortunate that coverage might be denied, the bonus is that you are now free to see whatever provider you choose, not just the ones limited to the assistance program!



Six Common Insurance Misconceptions!

4. Many dental benefit plans have exclusions for adult orthodontic treatment

Often companies provide the benefit for immediate family members (with maximum age limits up to 19 or 25), but not for adults. If you DO have adult orthodontic benefits included as part of your benefits package, consider yourself very lucky and be sure to take advantage of using them!



5. Dental benefits are not a requirement to begin orthodontic treatment

Many families who do not have dental benefits say they do not want to start orthodontic treatment until they get them. However, it is important to evaluate the true costs of doing so and often it might be more economical to NOT get dental benefits for only orthodontic reasons.

The orthodontic benefit is usually not provided in one lump sum, but is broken down installments over the course of treatment. In order to get the full amount of the orthodontic benefit, you have to keep the policy active the entire time. By the time you are finished with treatment, many times the premiums paid will be close to or even exceed the benefit received, so no savings was realized.



Be sure to check on this and do the math to see if the situation makes sense for your family!



Six Common Insurance Misconceptions!

6. Your policy must remain active throughout orthodontic treatment

If you change jobs or your dental benefits policy is cancelled, any remaining portion of the benefit will typically become your out-of-pocket responsibility. So, if your plan provides \$1500 of coverage that is broken down into even installments over a two-year orthodontic plan, but you change jobs after 1 year, the remaining \$750 becomes your responsibility.

Many times these differences can be re-submitted to the new dental benefits company, but be aware that sometimes they will not be approved for work that is "in progress".



While every dental benefits plan is different, the COE team members are experts with helping you maximize your dental benefits and helping sort through any confusion. They are always available to answer any questions and help you understand the policy that you or your employer has chosen for your family!

Please visit us at COEsmiles.com or call our office at 609-799-4628 to schedule a COMPLIMENTARY evaluation!



COESMILES.COM



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Braces and Amazing Smiles for Kids and Adults

609.799.4628