

Why Two Clinics Can Quote Different Prices for the Same Treatment

By JoD Money & Benefits · 6 min read

You get a quote at one dental office, a quote at another, and they do not match, even though both describe what sounds like the same treatment. It is a reasonable thing to find puzzling. Dentistry is not like buying a standard product with a set price tag, and the reasons two clinics can land on different numbers are mostly sensible once you see them laid out. Understanding them helps you compare quotes meaningfully rather than just by the bottom line.

There is no fixed price list

In Ontario, the Ontario Dental Association publishes a suggested fee guide each year, listing recommended fees for dental procedures. The key word is *suggested*. The guide is a reference, not a mandatory price list, and each practice sets its own fees. So two offices can both work from the same reference point and still arrive at different figures, because the guide suggests rather than dictates.

This single fact explains a surprising amount. People sometimes expect dental fees to be standardized like a regulated utility, but they are not. The fee guide creates consistency in how services are described and a common anchor for insurers, while leaving room for individual offices to differ.

The quote may not describe the same thing

Before concluding that one office is simply pricier, check that the two quotes actually describe identical treatment. They often do not. A crown quote might assume different materials. A filling might involve a different number of surfaces. One plan might include a step the other leaves out, or stage the work differently.

The most useful move is to ask each office to itemize the quote by procedure, so you can compare like with like. Two numbers that looked far apart sometimes turn out to describe meaningfully different work once you see the line items.

Materials and laboratory choices

For things like crowns, bridges, and other lab-made restorations, the materials used and the dental laboratory involved both affect cost. Different materials have different properties and price points, and labs vary in what they charge. Neither office is necessarily wrong; they may simply be proposing different options. Asking what material is planned, and why, turns a price difference into an informed choice.

Who is doing the work

Some treatment is carried out by a general dentist and some by a specialist, depending on complexity. A specialist has additional training in a particular area, and treatment involving specialist expertise can be priced differently from comparable general treatment. For a complex case, that expertise may be exactly what the situation calls for; for a straightforward one, a general dentist may be entirely appropriate. The right question is not only "how much" but "who is best suited to this particular treatment."

Context matters here too. A clinic's setup, its technology, the time it allocates per appointment, and the way it plans care all feed into its fees. As the team at [MiNa Family Dentistry](#) would put it to any patient comparing quotes, it is worth understanding what is included in a fee, not just the number itself. Two offices can price the same procedure differently simply because they include different things in it.

What a difference does not necessarily mean

A lower quote is not automatically a better deal, and a higher one is not automatically better care. Price can reflect materials, time, expertise, and what is bundled in, none of which is visible from the figure alone. The goal is to understand what you are paying for in each case, then decide which plan fits your needs and budget. That is a more reliable way to choose than treating the lowest number as the obvious winner.

How to compare quotes well

- Ask for an itemized quote from each office, listed by procedure.
- Confirm the quotes describe the same treatment, including materials and the number of visits.
- Ask what is included in each fee and what might be extra.
- Ask who would perform the treatment and whether specialist involvement is expected.
- If you have insurance, ask each office to submit a predetermination so you can compare your actual out-of-pocket share, not just the headline fee.

Working through that list usually explains a price gap and leaves you comparing value rather than guessing.

Frequently asked questions

Why is one dentist more expensive than another?

Several factors can account for it. Fees are set by each practice rather than fixed province-wide, since the Ontario Dental Association's fee guide is a suggestion rather than a mandatory list. Beyond that, quotes can differ because of the materials and laboratory involved, whether a general dentist or a specialist is doing the work, the time allotted, and what each fee includes. A higher or lower number does not, on its own, tell you which is the better choice for you.

Are dental fees the same at every clinic?

No. Ontario has a suggested fee guide that offices use as a reference, but each practice sets its own fees, so they can vary. Insurers often build coverage around a fee guide as well, which is why your reimbursement may differ from the exact amount a clinic quotes.

How can I tell if a quote is fair?

Rather than judging by the total alone, ask for an itemized quote and confirm it describes the same treatment as any other quote you are comparing, including materials and the number of visits. Ask what is included, who performs the work, and, if you are insured, request a predetermination so you can compare your actual share. Comparing the details gives you a far clearer sense of value than the headline number.

Sources & further reading

- [Ontario Dental Association — Your Oral Health](#) — background on the suggested fee guide and dental care in Ontario.
- [Canadian Dental Association — Your Oral Health](#) — general guidance on treatment options and decisions.
- [Government of Canada — Canadian Dental Care Plan](#) — public dental coverage information for eligible residents.