

# Mandatory COVID-19 Infection Control Increases Cost of Treating Patients

Approximately 97% of California dental offices completely closed or were only seeing emergency patients from March through May 2020. Since dental practices reopened, they have continued to face significantly increased overhead costs combined with decreased patient volume due to COVID-19 safety guidelines and lingering public wariness around receiving health care treatment. The costs of personal protective equipment (PPE) vary throughout the state and are exacerbated by product scarcity and supply chain disruptions. Below are examples of the monthly PPE cost increases in practices from various regions, adding thousands of dollars per month in new expenses since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

Dental practices have spent significant funds to implement extensive new infection control methods and procedures in order to reopen and safely treat patients in this new environment. CDA is advocating that all dental plans share in these costs, without which dental care is not currently possible, by providing a minimum PPE payment per patient visit through the end of 2021.

## Cost differences for dentists across California before and during COVID-19 pandemic (per patient visit)

### Pre-COVID-19 dental treatment appointment

Gloves	\$0.28
#1 Surgical mask	\$0.20
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$0.48</b>

### COVID-19 dental treatment appointment

Gloves	\$1.08
Face shield	\$0.40
#3 Gown	\$7.00
#3 Surgical mask	\$0.50
KN95/N95 mask	\$2.50
Head covering	\$0.20
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$11.68</b>

Example costs collected from a self-reported sample of California dentists in December 2020. Prices vary significantly throughout the state based on weekly changes, region and supplier.

These costs are compounded when calculated on a monthly basis and vary based on the size and patient load of a particular office. The graphs are samples that show the variation between different practices and clinics.

### Northern CA Small Practice

New per-patient costs: **\$11.68**  
Monthly expenses increased by **\$4,326** due to COVID-19 infection control protocols.



### Southern CA Large Nonprofit Clinic

New per-patient costs: **\$13.45**  
Higher-volume practices have more purchasing power but monthly expenses still increased by **\$6,200** due to COVID-19 infection control protocols.



### Central Valley Small Practice

New per-patient costs: **\$24.52**  
Regional variation in costs are significant. A Central Valley practice with smaller purchasing power experienced an increase of **\$7,074** per month due to COVID-19 infection control protocols.

