

What really keeps patients coming back to the same dentist

Key findings from a national survey of U.S. adults who make dental insurance decisions for their household

When families choose a dentist, there's a lot that goes into the decision-making process, and the care the dentist provides is just the tip of the iceberg for many. It's also about familiarity with the practice and practitioners, ease of access when scheduling an appointment or getting to and from the office and the overall experience. New research shows that for many patients, these practical considerations and positive interactions play a pivotal role in long-term loyalty.

In-network status is the top reason patients stay with a dentist

According to Humana's research, among dental insurance decision makers, being in network is the most frequently cited reason for staying with a dentist. The in-network participation status helps create much needed alignment between the consumer's coverage expectations and care decisions which, in turn, makes it easier for patients to continue with a provider over a longer period of time.

Convenience supports continuity of care

For many families, convenience remains a critical factor in whether patients maintain a long-term relationship with a dental practice. The location, appointment availability, and ease of scheduling appointments, whether for routine maintenance or emergencies, all influence how patients evaluate their ongoing care options.


Positive staff interactions reinforce continuity of care

Beyond access and coverage, patients also cite their experience within the dental office as a key reason for staying with a provider. Friendly interactions with their dental hygienists and other support staff contribute to how patients perceive the overall quality and consistency of care.


The takeaway

Patient loyalty reflects a combination of coverage alignment, convenience, and in-office experience, yet the research shows that continuity of care is not automatic. These findings highlight an opportunity for providers to focus on the factors patients themselves say matter most when building long-term relationships.

In-network status, convenience, and staff experience top the list of reasons patients stay with a dentist

 **46%** say their dentist is in network¹

 **43%** say the practice is convenient¹

 **42%** say they have friendly dental hygienists¹

Provider loyalty is not a guarantee

While survey respondents cite clear reasons for staying with a dentist, the research indicates that long-term relationships are not guaranteed.

25% of dental insurance decision makers report they have been with the same dentist for five years or more¹.

Source:

1. "Humana Dental Insurance," Opinium Research, November 2025.

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