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Dental SEO for Canadian Practices, What It Does and How to Tell If It's Working

Dental SEO helps your practice earn a position in Google's unpaid search results, both when patients search for a service you offer and when they're researching questions before booking an appointment. These are known as organic search results.

Unlike Google Ads, you don't pay for each click, but earning those positions takes time, often months, and the results can continue driving traffic after they're established. This guide covers what SEO is worth to a Canadian dental practice, how long it can take to rank, how to read your numbers, and the advertising rules that affect how the work should be done.

In this guide

- What organic search gets you, and what it doesn't
- What patients search for when they need a dentist
- How local search works differently from the rest of SEO
- Is your dental practice in a position for SEO to work yet
- How long before you see SEO results
- What makes a dental service page rank and convert
- The SEO advertising rules Ontario practices need to manage
- How to build dental SEO content that earns citations over time
- How to read SEO metrics and understand your organic search presence
- Why chasing the SEO dental terms you want most is the wrong first move
- What to look for in an SEO partner for your dental practice
- Frequently asked questions

What organic search gets you, and what it doesn't

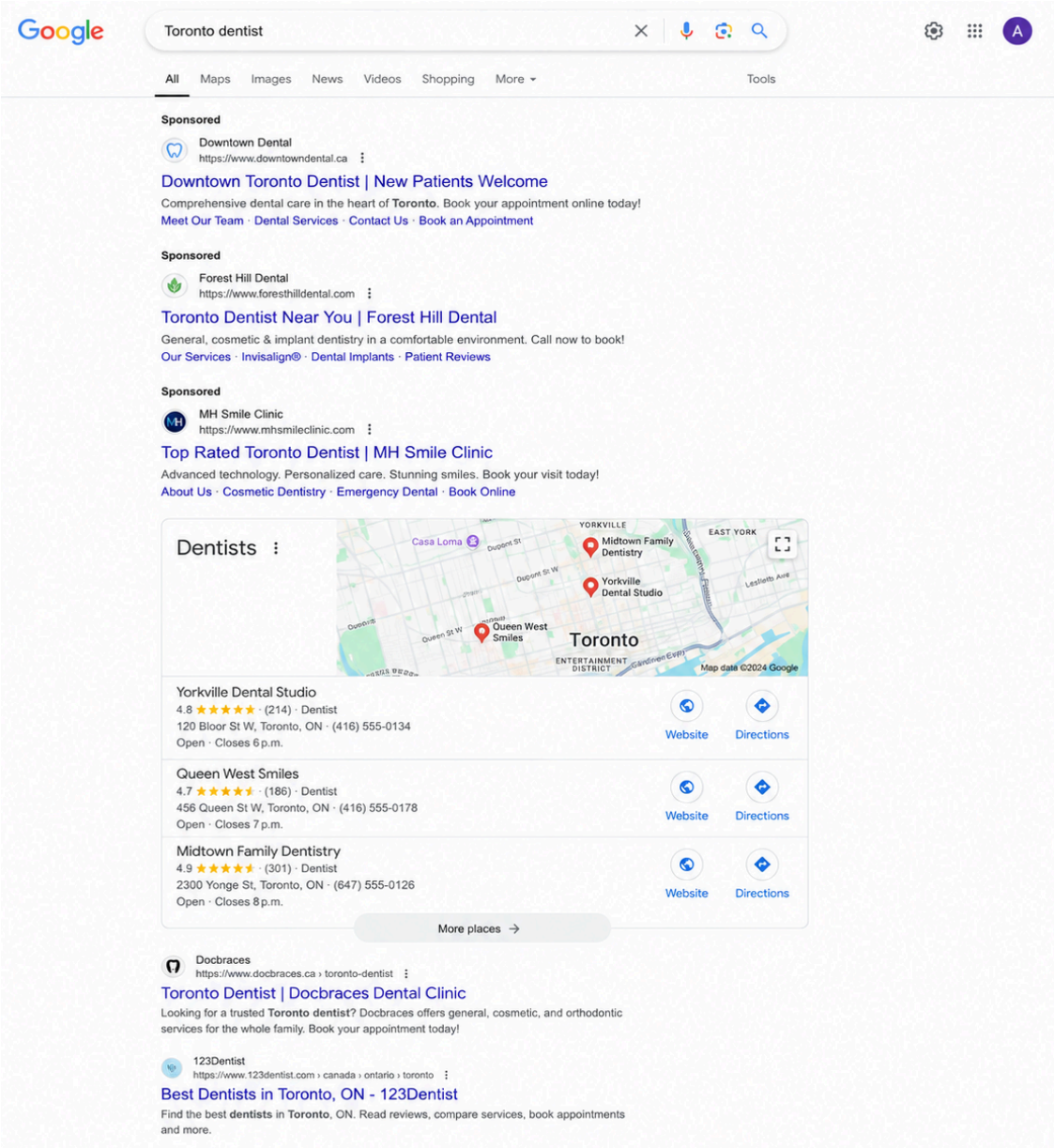
Organic search puts your dental practice in front of someone who has opened Google and typed a query, without you having to pay for that visibility.

Two limits follow from that:

- **Search demand.** If nobody in your area is searching for a particular service or question, SEO can't create that demand. Paid social, like Meta Ads, can put your practice in front of people who weren't actively searching.
- **Speed.** SEO takes time to build authority and visibility, so starting today won't bring you patients tomorrow. We'll cover the timeline in more detail below.

Paid search, including Google and Bing Ads, appears on the same results page but works under completely different rules. Google states that advertising has no effect on organic rankings, and that sites aren't charged to appear in organic results. Google Search Central's SEO guide states that increasing your ad budget won't improve your organic position, and turning ads off won't lower it.

If you're running both, report them separately. GA4 breaks these channels out as organic search and paid search, making it easier to see what each strategy is actually contributing.



Alt text: Google search results page for a Toronto dentist query with the ad block, local map pack and organic listings.

What patients search for when they need a dentist

Patients search in two different ways, and each needs a different kind of page on your website.

Service searches name a treatment, a dentist, or a location. Someone might search for a treatment followed by their neighbourhood, or simply look for a dentist nearby. These searches

have clear intent and are more likely to lead to a booking. Your service pages are designed to capture them.

Information searches ask a question: What does it cost? How long does it last? Will it hurt? Does insurance cover it? These searches are more common earlier in the patient's research and consideration process.

Both types of content have a role in a strong dental SEO strategy. Google finds many new pages through links, so an informational article can link to the relevant service page, helping patients find the next step while strengthening the connection between related pages. Google Search Central's SEO Starter Guide

The common mistake is focusing entirely on service pages while neglecting the informational content that supports them. You end up with the same collection of treatment pages as every other practice, with little else to help your site stand out.

The best topics are often tied to questions patients are asking right now. For example, Health Canada announced in April 2026 that more than 6.5 million Canadians were covered by the Canadian Dental Care Plan, with more than 4 million already having received care. An article explaining what that means for patients and whether your practice accepts the plan could capture relevant searches while building trust with prospective patients.

How local search works differently from the rest of SEO

For a single-location dental practice, the map results are usually the biggest source of new patients from search, and they're decided by different factors than your website's rankings.

These are the three businesses that appear in a box with a map when someone searches for a dentist near them, both in Google Search and in the Google Maps app. What ranks there isn't a page on your website. It's your Google Business Profile, which is a separate free listing you claim and maintain, and it can rank when your website doesn't rank at all.

Google's documentation for Business Profiles names three factors behind those results:

- Relevance, or how closely your profile matches what someone is searching for.
- Distance, or how far your practice is from the person searching.
- Prominence, which reflects how well known your practice is based in part on factors like backlinks from other websites and the number of reviews you have.

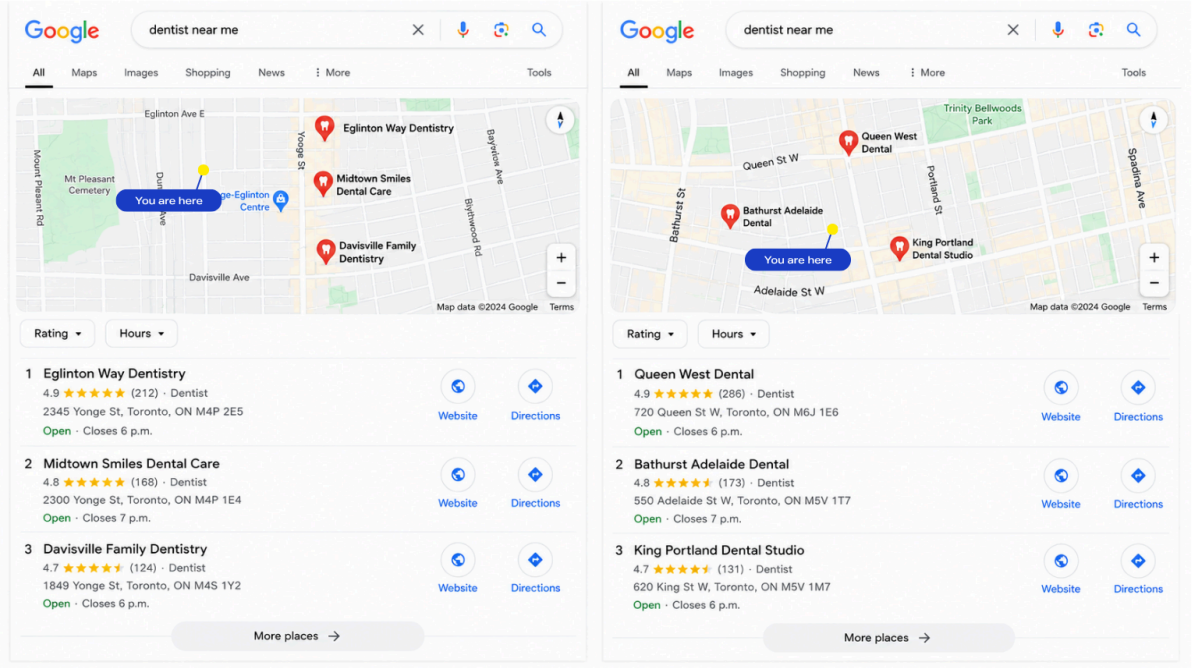
What this means for where you start

Four things follow from all of the above.

- The area you can realistically win map results in is smaller than the area you advertise to.
- A dental practice with a plain website and a complete, active Business Profile can appear above a practice with an excellent website and a profile nobody has touched in two years.
- If your profile is incomplete or unverified, fixing it will usually produce results faster and cheaper than anything on your website.
- A practice competing against ten others within a two-kilometre radius is in a genuinely different position from one that's the only clinic in its area, and it needs a different plan.

Google publishes setup guidance specifically for healthcare provider Business Profiles, which is a starting point to work from, and it covers requirements that may not apply to other kinds of business.

If your profile is the weak point, start with our Google Business Profile service or work through the steps in our post on getting a Business Profile in order.



Alt text: Side by side comparison of Google map pack results for a dentist search from two Toronto locations showing different practices ranked in each.

Is your dental practice in a position for SEO to work yet

Four questions predict your timeline better than any audit will.

Is your website indexed and technically healthy? Search your practice name in Google. If your pages come up, Google has indexed your site. From there, check whether the site loads quickly, works well on mobile, and gives Google a clear path to crawl your important pages. A slow site, broken links, indexing problems, or other technical issues can hold back everything you publish on top of them.

When was anything last published or updated? A site whose pages haven't been touched since 2019 gives Google fewer signals that the practice is actively maintaining useful information. A site that consistently publishes and improves its content gives Google more opportunities to discover and understand what the practice offers.

Does anything link to your practice? Your local business association, suppliers, the minor hockey team you sponsor, your college directory, or the school you graduated from. Each can be a legitimate link that helps establish your practice's prominence, and many are opportunities practices can pursue simply by asking.

Is your Business Profile verified, complete, and collecting reviews? If the answer is no, that's the first job, ahead of anything on the website. Your Business Profile plays a major role in how you appear in local search, so there is little point building a sophisticated SEO strategy while leaving this foundation unfinished.

Weak answers to two or more of these don't mean you shouldn't start. They mean the first few months may go into foundation work with less to show in a report, and an agency that promises immediate results without fixing those fundamentals is guessing.

When a new site behaves differently from an established one

A new website has almost nothing pointing at it, so Google discovers it slowly and comes back to check on it rarely. Every change you make takes longer to register, not because your site is being penalized, but because Google visits less often.

Submitting a sitemap and earning a handful of genuine local links helps speed that process up.

If you've rebuilt the site recently, check one thing. When a rebuild changes your URLs and the old addresses aren't redirected to the new ones, Google treats every page as new, and the search history attached to the old addresses is lost. That's the single most common damage we find when we take over a practice website.

How long before you see SEO results

Google answers this directly. The SEO Starter Guide states that some changes might take effect in a few hours, others could take several months, and that you should generally wait a few weeks before assessing whether the work had a beneficial effect.

So the answer depends on what's being changed, not on how long you've been active.

What changed	When you'd expect to see it	What you'd actually see
Titles and headings on pages already in Google	Days to two weeks	Google starts showing the page for the searches it's now clearly about. Impressions may rise but your position likely won't.
A new service page on an established site	Two to eight weeks	The page appears for narrow, specific searches first.
A new service page on a new site	Two to four months	Google takes longer to find it, then the same pattern follows.
Business Profile completeness and review growth	Weeks, then ongoing	Movement in the map results inside your immediate area.
Site-wide content and authority work	Four to six months and beyond	Enquiries that show up in the appointment book.

When the keyword research and planning were done properly, changing a page's title and headings can move it within days, and it makes for a good-looking monthly report. What's actually happened is that Google can now tell what the page is for, so it starts showing it to the right searchers. That's necessary before any content or on-page work.

What makes a dental service page rank and convert

A service page has one job. Somebody arrives with a need, clicks on a reputable site in the top search results, and books an appointment. Moving that page from position five to position one sends more people to the page, so if the page doesn't answer the question or doesn't make booking easy, a better position just means a higher bounce rate.

Build the page around serving the patient, not just word counts and keyword inclusions.

- Whether you offer the treatment they searched for, said plainly and near the top
- What happens at the first appointment, and how long it takes
- Whether you accept their coverage, including the federal plan
- Where you are, where to park, and which transit stops are nearby
- What some common questions are about the service, along with answers
- How to book, called out several times throughout the page

Including those six factors will help turn an organic click into a patient.

Give the reader one obvious next step

A page can rank well, read well, and still lose the patient at the last step, because the only way to book is a phone number in the footer or a form buried at the bottom of the page.

Test the booking integration end to end on a phone, with a real submission, once a month. Booking widgets stop working quietly after platform updates, and a practice can go weeks without realizing the form has been failing.

Then look at your own service page on a phone and see whether there are sufficient calls-to-action throughout the page, whether that is a call now button, a form submission, or a direct online booking.

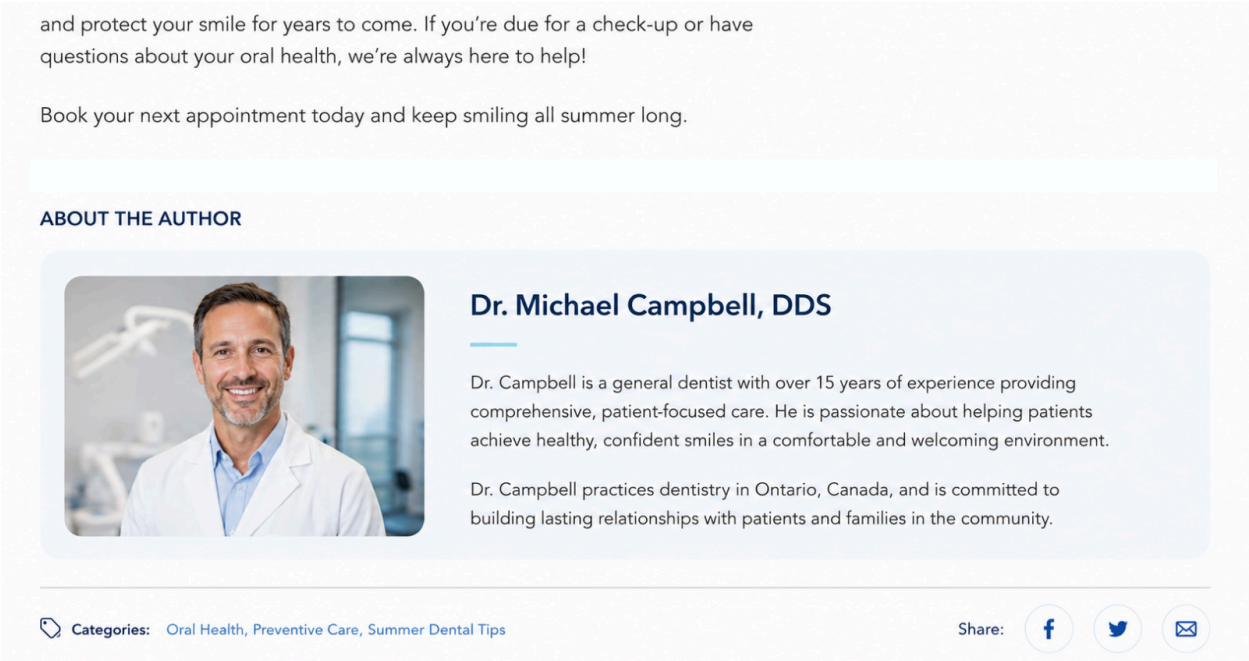
Why the person who wrote the page matters

Patients want to know who they're trusting with their teeth. Putting a real dentist's name, credentials, and bio on an informational page gives the content more credibility than publishing it without an author.

Author bios may also help strengthen the signals that search engines and AI platforms use to understand whether a piece of content comes from a credible source. That can potentially help with organic rankings and with your content being referenced by AI search tools like ChatGPT. It’s not a guarantee, but it gives Google and other platforms more context about who is behind the information.

Your author bio doesn't need to appear on every page. It makes the most sense for informational blog posts where expertise matters. Service pages can focus on the treatment or service itself.

This is one of the many technical nuances that we include in our on-page SEO process.



Alt text: Dental service seo page with an author bio to help support the articles seo authority.

The SEO advertising rules Ontario practices need to manage

In Ontario, your website counts as advertising in the regulatory sense.

The RCDSO's Practice Advisory on Professional Advertising, defines a professional advertisement as any material related to your practice that's published, displayed, distributed or used, whether by you directly or by someone on your behalf, and it names websites, logos, signage and newsletters explicitly. The advisory tells you to personally control all printed and electronic material about your practice that reaches the public. What your agency publishes is your advertising, and it's your certificate of registration attached to any complaint about it.

Several things the advisory identifies as being in violation of the regulation appear on dental websites regularly.

- Testimonials, or any statement that can only be verified by a person's personal feelings or views
- Statements indicative of superiority or uniqueness
- Statements that suggest or create an expectation of favourable results, or that appeal to the public's fears
- Superlative or comparative terms such as state of the art or cutting edge
- Incentive programs, including giveaways, contests, draws, or free products and services

- References to your continuing education, or to memberships and positions in societies and associations
- References to degrees or diplomas beyond those required for your certificate of registration

There's also a disclosure requirement that changes how service pages have to be written. Under the regulation, an advertisement referring to an area of practice, a dental procedure or a treatment has to disclose whether you're registered as a general practitioner or a specialist, and if a specialist, in which specialty. Every service page refers to a procedure by definition, so every service page needs that disclosure.

Advertising rules for health professionals are set provincially, so the specifics above apply to Ontario dentists and other provinces differ. We've written more broadly about digital advertising rules for healthcare professionals in Canada.

As a marketing agency with extensive experience working with businesses in the healthcare sector, we closely follow the advertising rules and professional standards set by the relevant provincial college when creating SEO content or any other marketing material.

How to build dental SEO content that earns citations over time

One page rarely changes anything on its own. What moves a practice from invisible to credible is a group of pages that between them answer every question a patient has about a subject, linked to each other.

A few best practices matter when building that group of content:

- **Give each article a clear keyword focus.** Use the target keyword naturally in the title, headings and body without forcing it into every paragraph.
- **Link related pages together.** Include relevant internal links to your service pages and other supporting content, along with external links when a credible source adds useful context.
- **Answer the question early.** Don't make patients or search engines dig through an introduction before getting to the answer they're looking for.
- **Cover the topic completely.** Address the related questions and considerations a patient is likely to have rather than stretching one narrow point into a longer article.
- **Write for the patient first.** Use clear headings, short sections and language your patients would actually understand.

The order is important. You publish the narrow, specific pages first, because those searches have fewer sites competing for them. Those pages accumulate visits and links. Then the

broader, more competitive term becomes reachable. This eventually ladders up to your core service pages, which are propped up by the authority of the content below them.

Google's results now often include an AI-written summary drawing on sources it treats as reliable for the question asked. Getting quoted in one works the same way as ranking: answer a specific question completely, in one place, better than the other pages Google is choosing between.

How to read SEO metrics and understand your organic search presence

Understanding your SEO performance can be complex. Generally, there are five core numbers that describe your organic presence.

Impressions. The number of times one of your pages appeared in someone's search results. It doesn't mean anyone read it. Rising impressions are the earliest sign that Google is showing your practice for more searches.

Clicks. The number of people who actually clicked on your Google listing and landed on your page. A page can gain impressions and lose clicks, which usually means the title and description under your link aren't giving people a reason to pick it.

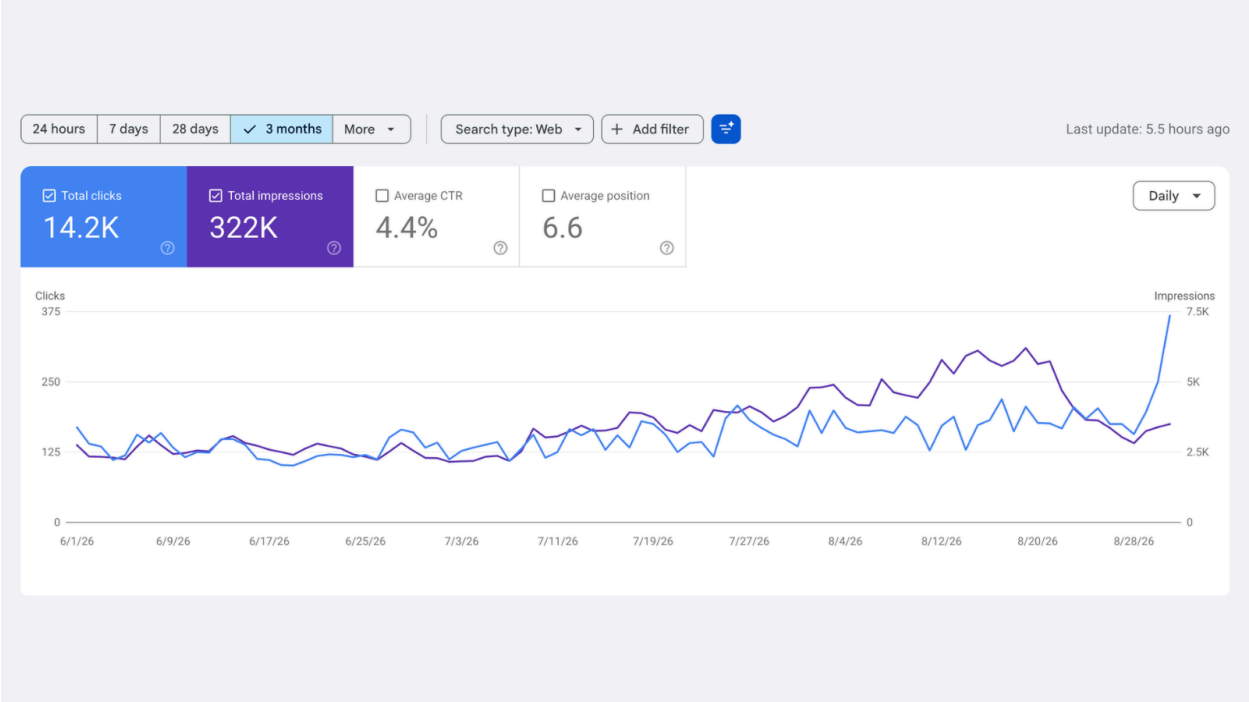
Organic sessions. The number of visits to your website that came from unpaid search results, measured in GA4. This tells you how much traffic your SEO is actually bringing to the site, but it doesn't tell you whether those visitors became patients.

Average position. Where your listing typically appeared across searches and locations. Because it's an average, the number can be misleading. Individual pages have their own positions: 1–10 is the first page of Google, 11–20 the second, 21–30 the third, and so on.

Queries. The words people typed before your page appeared. It tells you what patients ask for and which of your pages surfaced for that query.

The three SEO metrics worth checking every month

- **Impressions on your service pages.** These tell you whether your pages are starting to appear in search results.
- **Clicks from queries that describe what you actually do.** Visits from unrelated searches can make a report look busy without bringing in potential patients.
- **New patients who found you through search.** This is the metric that connects SEO activity to actual business. If more patients are finding and contacting you through organic search, your SEO is doing its job.



Alt text: Google Search Console performance dashboard with impressions, clicks, average position and queries report displaying SEO performance data for a dental practice in Canada.

Why chasing the SEO dental terms you want most is the wrong first move

The request we hear most often from practice owners is to rank for the biggest, most obvious search in their city, by spring. It has the most demand behind it, which is exactly why every other practice in the city and every directory is competing for it. It's usually the last search you'll win, not the first.

What works is slower, taking the narrower searches where two or three sites are competing instead of forty, you win those, and your site builds a record of answering questions in that area. The competitive term becomes reachable after that, over months and sometimes longer.

If you're one location with a neglected Business Profile, an outdated website, and a small budget, a monthly content schedule isn't your most impactful place to spend. Your first priority should be to fix the profile and rewrite the service pages before you publish articles around them.

What to look for in an SEO partner for your dental practice

Most practices hire someone for this eventually, and who you hire matters more than any tactic in this guide.

Most high-level practices partner with a dental SEO agency to manage their organic growth. Google publishes its own guidance on that decision, which is worth using. It recommends:

- Asking what results to expect and in what timeframe
- Asking about experience in your industry and your city
- Granting only read access to Search Console at the audit stage
- Treating any guarantee of first place as a reason to look elsewhere.

It adds that nobody can guarantee a number one ranking, and that an audit should give you a realistic estimate of the improvement available and of the work involved in getting it.

For an Ontario dental practice, add four questions of your own.

- How is this priced, and does any part of the fee vary with the number of patients it generates? Given the RCDSO clause, that answer should be no.
- Who checks the copy against the College's advertising advisory before it goes live?
- Will the Search Console and Business Profile accounts be registered to the practice?
- What will we be visible for in month four, and how will you show me?

If you'd rather go through this against your own site than against a checklist, that's what we do. Have a look at how we approach SEO and help dental practices grow organically online.

Frequently asked questions

What does dental SEO cost in Canada?

There isn't a reliable industry benchmark for dental SEO specifically. As a broader reference point, Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada's 2024 data for Canadian dental practices shows average advertising and promotion spending of $11,500 against average revenue of $799,000, or about 1.4%. The figure covers all advertising and promotion, not SEO alone.

How are the keywords chosen?

Based on what patients in your area actually search for, balanced against what your site can realistically compete for. Your own Google Search Console data is a good place to start

because it shows searches you already appear for, including terms you may not have thought to target. We also look at local competitors and the services you want to grow.

Is SEO better than Google Ads for a dental practice?

They solve different problems. Ads can bring enquiries quickly, but the traffic stops when you stop paying. Organic search takes longer to build but can continue bringing traffic without paying for every click. For that reason, many practices use both, with paid search covering immediate demand while SEO builds over time.

Can I do this myself?

Parts of it, yes. Claiming and completing your Business Profile, asking patients for reviews, testing your booking form and improving your service pages are all things an office manager can handle. More technical work, ongoing content and competitive SEO usually require more time and expertise.

How do I know my SEO efforts are working?

Look for movement in impressions, clicks and organic sessions before you expect a noticeable increase in new patients. Early growth in impressions can show that Google is starting to surface your pages for more searches, followed by increases in clicks and organic traffic. The exact timeline varies by practice, so if nothing is moving after several months, that's a reasonable point to take a closer look at the strategy.