

Definition of Common Dental Terms

ABUTMENT - A tooth or root that retains or supports a fixed bridge or a removable prosthesis.

ACID ETCH - The etching of a tooth with a mild acid to aid in the retention of composite filling material.

ACRYLIC - Plastic materials used in the fabrication of dentures and crowns and occasionally as a restorative filling material.

AMALGAM - A metal alloy usually consisting of silver, tin, zinc and copper combined with liquid pure mercury and used as restorative material in operative dentistry.

ANESTHESIA

Local - The condition produced by the administration of specific agents to achieve the loss of pain sensation in a specific location or area of the body.

General - The condition produced by the administration of specific agents to render the patient completely unconscious and without pain sensation.

APPLIANCE - A device used to provide function, therapeutic (healing) effect, space maintenance, or as an application of force to teeth to provide movement or growth changes as in Orthodontics.

Fixed - One that is attached to the teeth by cement or by adhesive materials and cannot be removed by the patient.

Removable - One that can be taken in and out of the mouth by the patient.

Prosthetic - Used to provide replacement for a missing tooth.

BITEWING - A type of dental x-ray film that has a central tab or wing upon which the teeth close to hold the film in position. They are commonly called decay detecting x-rays because they show decay better than other x-rays.

BRIDGEWORK OR PROSTHETIC APPLIANCE - Pontics or replacement teeth retained with crowns or inlays cemented to the natural teeth, which are used as abutments.

Fixed- removable - One which the dentist can remove but the patient cannot.

Removable - A partial denture retained by attachments that permit removal of the denture. Normally held by clasps.

CARIES - A disease of progressive destruction of the teeth from bacterially produced acids on tooth surfaces.

COMPOSITE - Tooth colored filling material primarily used in the anterior teeth.

CROWN - A natural crown is the portion of a tooth covered by enamel. An artificial crown (cap) restores the anatomy, function and esthetics of the natural crown.

DENTAL HYGIENIST - A person who has been trained to clean teeth, and provide additional services and information on the prevention of oral disease.

DENTURE - A device replacing missing teeth. The term usually refers to full or partial dentures but it actually means any substitute for missing natural teeth.

ENDODONTIC THERAPY - Treatment of diseases of the dental pulp and their sequelae.

FLUORIDE - A solution of fluorine that is applied topically to the teeth for the purpose of preventing dental decay.

IMPLANT - A device surgically inserted into or onto the jawbone. It may support a crown or crowns, partial denture, complete denture or may be used as an abutment for a fixed bridge.

IMPRESSION - A negative reproduction of a given area. It is made in order to produce a positive form or cast of the recorded teeth and/or soft tissues of the mouth.

INLAY - A restoration usually of cast metal made to fit a prepared tooth cavity and then cemented into place.

MALOCCLUSION - An abnormal contact and/or position of the opposing teeth when brought together.

OCCLUSION - The contact relationship of the upper and lower teeth when they are brought together.

OCCLUSAL GUARDS/BITE GUARDS - Appliances to relieve clenching and grinding of teeth.

ONLAY - A case restoration that Covers the entire chewing surface of the tooth.

ORTHODONTICS - The branch of dentistry primarily concerned with the detection, prevention and correction of abnormalities in the positioning of the teeth in their relationship to the jaws.

PALLIATIVE - An alleviating measure. To relieve, but not cure.

PARTIAL DENTURE - A prosthesis replacing one or more, but less than all, of the natural teeth and associated structures; may be removable or fixed, one side or two sides.

PEDODONTICS - The specialty of children's dentistry.

PERIODONTICS - The science of examination, diagnosis, and treatment of diseases affecting the supporting structures of the teeth.

PONTIC - The part of a fixed bridge which is suspended between the abutments and which replaces a missing tooth or teeth.

PROPHYLAXIS - The removal of tartar and stains from the teeth. The cleaning of the teeth by a dentist or dental hygienist.

REBASE - A process of refitting a denture by the replacement of the entire denture-base material without changing the occlusal relations of the teeth.

RELINE - To resurface the tissue-borne areas of a denture with new material.

RESTORATION - A broad term applied to any inlay, crown, bridge, partial dentures, or complete denture that restores or replaces loss of tooth structure, teeth or oral tissue. The term applies to the end result of repairing and restoring or reforming the shape, form and function of part or all of a tooth or teeth.

ROOT CANAL THERAPY - The complete removal of the pulp tissues of a tooth, sterilization of the pulp chamber and root canals, and filling these spaces with a sealing material.

SCALING - The removal of calculus (tartar) and stains from teeth with special instruments.

SEALANT - A resinous agent applied to the grooves and pits of teeth to reduce decay.

SILICATE - A relatively hard and translucent restorative material that is used primarily in the anterior teeth.

SPLINTING - Stabilizing or immobilizing teeth to gain strength and/or facilitate healing.

TMJ, TMD, CMD AND RELATED - Non-surgical care connected with the detection or correction of jaw joint problems, including temporomandibular joint and craniomandibular disorders, or other conditions of the joints linking the jawbone and skull, including the complex of muscles, nerves, and other tissues related to that joint.

TOPICAL - Painting the surface of teeth as in fluoride treatment, or application of an anesthetic formula to the surface of the gum.

VERTICAL DIMENSION - The degree of jaw separation when the teeth are in contact.