

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

A

**Abscess**

A localized inflammation due to a collection of pus in the bone or soft tissue, usually caused by an infection.

**Abutment**

A tooth or implant used to support a prosthesis. A crown unit used as part of a fixed bridge.

**Amalgam**

A dental filling material, composed of mercury and other minerals, used to fill decayed teeth.

**Alveoloplasty**

A surgical procedure used to recontour the supporting bone structures in preparation of a complete or partial denture.

**Anesthetic**

A class of drugs that eliminates or reduces pain. See local anesthetic.

**Anterior**

Refers to the teeth and tissues located towards the front of the mouth (upper or lower incisors and canines).

**Apex**

The tip or end of the root of the tooth.

**Apicoectomy**

The amputation of the apex of a tooth.

B

**Bicuspid**

A two-cusped tooth found between the molar and the cuspid also known as an eye tooth or canine tooth.

**Biopsy**

A process of removing tissue to determine the existence of pathology.

**Bitewing x-rays**

X-rays taken of the crowns of teeth to check for decay.

**Bleaching**

The technique of applying a chemical agent, usually hydrogen peroxide, to the teeth to whiten them.

### Bonding

A process to chemically etch the tooth's enamel to better attach (bond) composite filling material, veneers, or plastic/acrylic.

### Bone loss

The breakdown and loss of the bone that supports the teeth, usually caused by infection or long-term occlusal (chewing areas of the teeth) stress.

### Bridge

A nonremovable restoration that is used to replace missing teeth.

### Brush biopsy

Brush biopsy is a painless procedure used to gather cells in the mouth. The dentist uses a small brush to take a tissue specimen, which is then sent to a laboratory for analysis to determine the presence of pre-cancerous or early stage cancerous cells. Laboratory results are used to determine the need for further procedures.

### Bruxism

The involuntary clenching or grinding of the teeth.

### C

#### Calculus

The hard deposit of mineralized plaque that forms on the crown and/or root of the tooth. Also referred to as tartar.

#### Canine tooth

The second tooth from the big front tooth, commonly called the eye tooth or cuspid.

#### Cap

Another term for crown; usually referring to a crown for a front tooth.

#### Caries

The correct technical term for decay which is the progressive breaking down or dissolving of tooth structure, caused by the acid produced when bacteria digest sugars.

#### Cavity

A layman's term for tooth decay. Also, the dental term for the hole that is left after decay has been removed.

#### Cement

A special type of glue used to hold a crown in place. It also acts as an insulator to protect the tooth's nerve.

#### Cementum

The very thin, bonelike structure that covers the root of the tooth.

#### Clenching

The forceful holding together of the upper and lower teeth, which places stress on the ligaments that hold the teeth to the jawbone and the lower jaw to the skull.

#### Composite

A tooth-colored filling made of plastic resin or porcelain.

#### Consultation

A discussion with another health care professional when additional feedback is needed during diagnosis or treatment. Usually, a consultation is by referral from a primary care physician.

#### Cosmetic dentistry

Any dental treatment or repair that is solely rendered to improve the appearance of the teeth or mouth.

#### Coverage

The benefits that are provided according to the terms of a participant's specific health benefits plan.

#### Crown

The portion of a tooth that is covered by enamel. Also a dental restoration that covers the entire tooth and restores it to its original shape.

#### Crown lengthening

A surgical procedure exposing more tooth for restorative purposes.

#### Curettage

A deep scaling of that portion of the tooth below the gum line. Purpose is to remove calculus and infected gum tissue.

#### Cuspid

See canine tooth.

#### Cusp(s)

The protruding portion(s) of a tooth's chewing surface.

#### D

##### DDS

Doctor of Dental Surgery or DMD, Doctor of Dental Medicine. Degrees given to dental school graduates. Both degrees are the same; particular dental schools identify at their discretion their graduates as DMD or DDS.

#### Decay

See caries.

Deciduous

See primary teeth.

Dental floss

A thin, nylon string, waxed or unwaxed, that is inserted between the teeth to remove food and plaque.

Dental hygienist

A dental professional specializing in cleaning the teeth by removing plaque, calculus, and diseased gum tissue. He/She acts as the patient's guide in establishing a proper oral hygiene program.

Dentin

The part of the tooth that is under both the enamel which covers the crown and the cemented which covers the root

Denture

A removable appliance used to replace teeth. A complete denture replaces all of the upper teeth and/or all the lower teeth. See also partial denture

Diagnostic Tests

Tests and procedures ordered by a physician to help diagnose or monitor a patient's condition or disease. Diagnostic tools include radiology, ultrasound, nuclear medicine, laboratory and pathology services or tests

Direct pulp cap

The procedure in which the exposed pulp is covered with a dressing or cement that protects the pulp and promotes healing and repair

Dry socket

A localized inflammation of the tooth socket following an extraction due to infection or loss of a blood clot

E

Emergency

An accident or sudden illness that a person with an average knowledge of medical science believes needs to be treated right away or it could result in loss of life, serious medical complications or permanent disability. Examples of emergency situations include: uncontrolled bleeding, seizure or loss of consciousness, shortness of breath, chest pain or squeezing sensations in the chest, suspected overdose of medication or poisoning, sudden paralysis or slurred speech, severe burns, broken bones or severe pain.

Enamel

The hard, calcified (mineralized) portion of the tooth which covers the crown. Enamel is the hardest substance in the body.

#### Endodontics

The dental specialty that deals with injuries to or diseases of the pulp, or nerve, of the tooth.

#### Excision

Surgical removal of bone or tissue.

#### Exostosis

The overgrowth of normal bone.

#### Extracoronary

The outside of the crown of the tooth.

#### Extraction

The removal of a tooth.

#### Extraoral

The outside of the mouth.

#### F

##### Filling

Material used to fill a cavity or replace part of a tooth.

##### Floss

See dental floss.

##### Fluoride

A chemical compound used to prevent dental decay, utilized in fluoridated water systems and/or applied directly to the teeth.

##### Frenum

Muscle fibers covered by a mucous membrane that attaches the cheek, lips and or tongue to associated dental mucosa.

##### Frenectomy

The removal of a frenum.

#### G

##### Gingiva

The soft tissue that covers the jawbone. Also referred to as the gums.

##### Gingivectomy

The removal of gingiva (gum).

### Gingivitis

An inflammation or infection of the gingiva (gum tissue); the initial stage of gum disease.

### Gingivoplasty

A surgical procedure to reshape or repair the gingiva (gum).

### Graft

A piece of tissue or synthetic material placed in contact with tissue to repair a defect or supplement a deficiency.

### Gum

See gingiva.

### Gum disease

See periodontal disease.

### H

#### High noble metal

See metals, classification of.

### HIPAA

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996. The law has several parts: The first part addresses health insurance portability and is designed to protect health insurance coverage for workers and their families when they change or lose their jobs. Another part of the law is designed to reduce the administrative costs of providing and paying for healthcare through standardization. The law also includes requirements to protect the privacy of individuals' protected health information. Health plans, providers and other organizations with access to protected health information are covered by the requirements of HIPAA.

### I

#### Immediate denture

A denture constructed for immediate placement after removal of the remaining teeth.

#### Impacted tooth

An unerupted or partially erupted tooth that is positioned against another tooth, bone or soft tissue so that complete eruption is unlikely.

#### Implant

An artificial device, usually made of a metal alloy or ceramic material, that is implanted within the jawbone as a means to attach an artificial crown, denture, or bridge.

#### Incisors

The four front teeth referred to as central and lateral incisors, located in the upper and lower jaws and used to cut and tear food. The central incisors are the two large teeth in

the middle of the mouth and the lateral incisors are next to the central incisor, one on each side.

**Indirect pulp cap**

A procedure in which the nearly exposed pulp is covered with a protective dressing to protect the pulp from additional injury and to promote healing and repair via formation of secondary dentin.

**Inlay**

A cast gold filling that is used to replace part of a tooth.

**Interproximal**

The area between two adjacent teeth.

**Intracoronal**

The area within the crown of a tooth.

**Intraoral**

The inside of the mouth

**L**

**Labial**

The area pertaining to or around the lip.

**Lingual**

The area pertaining to or around the tongue.

**Local anesthetic**

The injection given in the mouth to numb the areas where a tooth or area needs a dental procedure. Often referred to as novocaine.

**M**

**Malocclusion**

The improper alignment of biting or chewing surfaces of upper and lower teeth.

**Mandible**

The lower jaw.

**Maryland bridge**

The trade name that has become synonymous with any resin bonded fixed partial denture (bridge).

**Mastication**

The act of chewing.

## Maxilla

The upper jaw.

## Medicare

Title XVIII of the Social Security Act that provides payment for medical and health services to the population aged 65 and over regardless of income, as well as certain disabled persons and persons with ESRD.

## Metals, classification of

The noble metal classification system has been adopted as a more precise method of reporting various alloys in dentistry commonly used in crowns, bridges and dentures. These alloys contain varying percentages of Gold, Palladium and/or Platinum. High noble contains more than 60% of Gold, Palladium, and/or Platinum (with at least 40% gold); noble contains more than 25% Gold, Palladium and/or Platinum; predominantly base contains less than 25% Gold, Palladium and/or Platinum.

## Molars

The broad, multicuspated back teeth, used for grinding food are considered the largest teeth in the mouth. In adults there are a total of twelve molars (including the four wisdom teeth, or third molars), three on each side of the upper and lower jaws.

## N

### Nitrous oxide

A controlled mixture of nitrogen and oxygen gases (N<sub>2</sub>O) that is inhaled by the patient in order to decrease sensitivity to pain. Also referred to as laughing gas.

## Novocaine

A generic name for the many kinds of anesthetics used in the dental injection, such as Xylocaine, Lidocaine, or Novocaine. See local anesthetic.

## O

### Occlusal x-ray

An intraoral x-ray taken with the film held between the teeth in biting position.

### Occlusal surface

The chewing surface of the back teeth.

### Occlusion

Any contact between biting or chewing surfaces of upper and lower teeth.

### Onlay

A cast gold or porcelain filling that covers one or all of the tooth's cusps.

### Oral surgery

The removal of teeth and the repair and treatment of other oral problems, such as tumors and fractures.

#### Orthodontics

A specialized branch of dentistry that corrects malocclusion and restores the teeth to proper alignment and function. There are several different types of appliances used in orthodontics, one of which is commonly referred to as braces.

#### Overbite

A condition in which the upper teeth excessively overlap the lower teeth when the jaw is closed. This condition can be corrected with orthodontics.

#### P

##### Palate

The hard and soft tissues forming the roof of the mouth.

##### Palliative

Treatment that relieves pain but is NOT curative.

##### Panorex

An extraoral full-mouth X-ray that records the teeth and the upper and lower jaws on one film.

##### Partial denture

A removable appliance used to replace one or more lost teeth.

##### Pediatric dentistry

The specialized branch of dentistry that deals solely with treating children's dental disease. Also referred to as pedodontics.

##### Periapical

The area that surrounds the root tip of a tooth.

##### Pericoronitis

An inflammation of the gum tissue around the crown of a tooth, usually the third molar.

##### Periodontal

Relating to the tissue and bone that supports the tooth (from peri, meaning "around," and odont, "tooth").

##### Periodontal disease

The inflammation and infection of gums, ligaments, bone, and other tissues surrounding the teeth. Gingivitis and periodontitis are the two main forms of periodontal disease. Also called gum disease or pyorrhea.

#### Periodontal pocket

An abnormal deepening of the gingival crevice. It is caused when disease and infection destroy the ligament that attaches the gum to the tooth and the underlying bone.

#### Periodontal surgery

A surgical procedure involving the gums and jawbone.

#### Periodontics

The dental speciality that deals with and treats the gum tissue and bone that supports the teeth.

#### Periodontitis

Inflammation of the supporting structures of the tooth, including the gum, the periodontal ligament, and the jawbone.

#### Periradicular

The area which surrounds a portion of the root of the tooth.

#### Permanent teeth

The thirty-two adult teeth that replace the baby, or primary teeth. Also known as secondary teeth.

#### Pit

A recessed area found on the surface of a tooth, usually where the grooves of the tooth meet.

#### Plaque

A film of sticky material containing saliva, food particles, and bacteria that attaches to the tooth surface both above and below the gum line. When left on the tooth it can promote gum disease and tooth decay.

#### Pontic

An artificial tooth used in a bridge to replace a missing tooth.

#### Premolar

Another name for bicuspid.

#### Preventive care

Medical and dental services aimed at early detection and intervention.

#### Preventive dentistry

Education and treatment devoted to and concerned with preventing the development of dental disease.

#### Preventive treatment

Any action taken by the patient, assisted by the dentist, hygienist, and the office staff that serves to prevent dental or other disease. Sealants, cleanings and space maintainers are examples of preventive treatment.

#### Primary teeth

The first set of teeth that humans get, lasting until the permanent teeth come in. Also referred to as deciduous teeth or baby teeth.

#### Prophylaxis

The scaling and polishing procedure performed to remove calculus, plaque, and stains from the crowns of the teeth.

#### Prosthetic Devices

A device that replaces all or a part of the human body because a part of the body is permanently damaged, is absent or is malfunctioning.

#### Prosthodontics

The dental specialty dealing with the replacement of missing teeth and other oral structures.

#### Provider

A licensed health care facility, program, agency, physician or health professional that delivers health care services.

#### Pulp

The hollow chamber inside the crown of the tooth that contains its nerves and blood vessels.

#### Pulpectomy

Removal of the entire pulp from the canals in the root.

#### Pulpitis

An often painful inflammation of the dental pulp or nerve.

#### Pulpotomy

The removal of a portion of the tooth's pulp.

#### Q

##### Quadrant

The dental term for the division of the jaws into four parts, beginning at the midline of the arch and extending towards the last tooth in the back of the mouth. There are four quadrants in the mouth; each quadrant generally contains five to eight teeth.

#### R

##### Rebase

The process of refitting a denture by replacing the base material.

### Receded gums

A condition characterized by the abnormal loss of gum tissue due to infection or bone loss.

### Referral

When a dental patient from one office is sent to another dentist, usually a specialist, for treatment or consultation.

### Reline

The process of resurfacing the tissue side of a denture with a base material.

### Replantation

The return of a tooth to its socket.

### Resorption

The breakdown and assimilation of the bone that supports the tooth, i.e., bone loss.

### Restoration

Any material or device used to replace lost tooth structure (filling, crown) or to replace a lost tooth or teeth (bridge, dentures, complete or partial).

### Retainer

A removable dental appliance, usually used in orthodontics, that maintains space between teeth or holds teeth in a fixed position until the bone solidifies around them.

### Retrograde filling

A method of sealing the root canal by preparing and filling it from the root tip, generally done at the completion of an apicoectomy.

### Root

The part of the tooth below the crown, normally encased in the jawbone. It is made up of dentin, includes the root canal, and is covered by cementum.

### Root canal

The hollow part of the tooth's root. It runs from the tip of the root into the pulp.

### Root canal therapy

The process of treating disease or inflammation of the pulp or root canal. This involves removing the pulp and root's nerve(s) and filling the canal(s) with an appropriate material to permanently seal it.

### Root planing

The process of scaling and planing exposed root surfaces to remove all calculus, plaque, and infected tissue.

## S

### Scaling

A procedure used to remove plaque, calculus and stains from the teeth.

### Sealant

A composite material used to seal the decay-prone pits, fissures, and grooves of children's teeth to prevent decay.

### Six-year molar

The first permanent tooth to erupt, usually between the ages of five and six.

### Socket

The hole in the jawbone into which the tooth fits.

### Space maintainer

A dental appliance that fills the space of a lost tooth or teeth and prevents the other teeth from moving into the space. Used especially in orthodontic and pediatric treatment.

### Specialists

Providers whose practices are limited to treating a specific disease (e.g., oncologists), specific parts of the body (e.g., ear, nose and throat), a specific age group (e.g., pediatrician), or specific procedures (e.g., oral surgery).

### Stainless steel crown

A pre-made metal crown, shaped like a tooth, that is used to temporarily cover a seriously decayed or broken down tooth. Used most often on children's teeth.

### Subgingival scaling

The removal of calculus and plaque found on the tooth below the gum line.

### Supra gingival scaling

The removal of calculus and plaque found on the tooth above the gum line.

### Systemic

Relating to the whole body.

## T

### Tartar

See calculus.

### Temporomandibular joint (TMJ)

The connecting hinge mechanism between the upper jaw and the base of the skull.

### Temporomandibular joint (TMJ) syndrome

The problems associated with TMJ, usually involving pain or discomfort in the joints and ligaments that attach the lower jaw to the skull or in the muscles used for chewing.

#### Third molar

The last of the three molar teeth, also called wisdom teeth. There are four third molars, two in the lower jaw and two in the upper jaw, one on each side. Some people are born without third molars.

#### Torus

A bony elevation or protuberance of normal bone. Usually seen on the upper palate behind the front teeth or under the tongue inside the lower jaw.

#### Treatment plan

A list of the work the dentist proposes to perform on a dental patient based on the results of the dentist's X rays, examination, and diagnosis. Often more than one treatment plan is presented.

#### U

##### Uvula

The "punching bag" hanging in the back of your throat.

#### V

##### Veneer

An artificial filling material, usually plastic, composite, or porcelain, that is used to provide an aesthetic covering over the visible surface of a tooth. Most often used on front teeth.

#### W

##### Wisdom teeth

See third molar.