

DEFINITIONS AND DENTAL TERMS

ABUTMENT:	An implant used to support a bridge or prosthesis.
ABSCESS:	Acute or chronic, localized infection with a collection of pus, associated with tissue destruction and frequently swelling.
AMALGAM	An alloy containing Mercury and Silver used in direct dental restorations.
ANTERIOR	Refers to the teeth and tissues located towards the front of the mouth – maxillary and mandibular incisors and canines.
APEX	The tip or end of the root of the tooth.
ARCH	The curved structure of the upper and lower dentition or the remains after the loss of some or all of the natural teeth.
BICUSPID	A premolar tooth; a tooth with two cusps between the eye teeth and the molars.
BITEWING	Interproximal view radiograph (X-ray) of the coronal portion of the tooth.
BLEACHING	The process of whitening and brightening teeth using dental products, either at home or in the dental office.
BONDING	Process by which two or more components are made integral by mechanical and/or chemical adhesion at their interface.
BRIDGE	A fixed partial denture which is a prosthetic replacement of one or more missing teeth cemented or attached to the retained teeth or implant abutments adjacent to the space; removable partial denture (removable bridge) is a prosthetic replacement of one or more missing teeth on a framework that can be removed by the patient.
BRUXISM	The grinding of the teeth.
BUCCAL	Pertaining to or around the cheek.
CALCULUS	Hard deposit of mineralized plaque which is attached to crowns and/or roots of teeth.

CANAL	A relatively narrow tubular passage or channel; space inside the root portion of a tooth containing pulp tissue; the passage which transmits vessels and nerves through the jaw to branches that distributes them to the teeth.
CARIES	Commonly used term for tooth decay.
CAVITY	Decay in tooth caused by caries; also referred to as carious lesion.
CLENCHING	The clamping and pressing of the jaws and teeth together in occlusion, frequently associated with psychological stress or physical effort.
COMPOSITE	A dental restorative material made up of disparate or separate parts (e.g: resin and quartz particles)
CORONAL	The upper part of the tooth; the part visible in the mouth.
COSMETIC DENTISTRY	A variety of dental procedures that enhance a person's smile. These procedures can include all porcelain crowns, veneers, whitening, and contouring teeth.
CROWN	<i>Anatomical crown</i> – that portion of tooth normally covered by, and including, enamel; <i>Abutment crown</i> – artificial crown serving for the retention or support of a dental prosthesis; <i>Artificial crown</i> – restoration covering or replacing the major part, or the whole of the clinical crown of a tooth; <i>Clinical crown</i> – that portion of a tooth not covered by supporting tissues.
CROWN LENGTHENING	A surgical procedure exposing more tooth.
CUSP	Pointed or rounded eminence on or near the masticating surface of a tooth.
DEBRIDEMENT	Removal of subgingival and/or supragingival plaque and calculus.
DECAY	The lay term for carious lesions in a tooth; decomposition of tooth structure.
DENTAL PROPHYLAXIS	Scaling and polishing procedure performed to remove coronal plaque, calculus, and stains.

DENTITION	The teeth in the dental arch; permanent dentition – refers to the permanent teeth in the dental arch; deciduous dentition – refers to the deciduous or primary teeth in the dental arch.
DENTURE	An artificial substitute for natural teeth and adjacent tissues.
DENTURE BASE	That part of a denture that makes contact with soft tissue and retains the artificial teeth.
DIASTEMA	A space, such as one between two adjacent teeth in the same dental arch.
DISTAL	Toward the back of the dental arch (away from the midline).
EDENTULOUS	Without teeth.
ENAMEL	Hard calcified tissue covering dentin of the crown of tooth.
EXUDATE	A material usually resulting from infection and inflammation; pus.
FACIAL	The surface of a tooth directed toward the face.
FILLING	A lay term used for the restoring of lost tooth structure by using materials such as metal, alloy, plastic, or cement.
FRACTURE	The breaking of a part; breaking of a tooth.
GINGIVA	Soft tissues overlying the crowns of unerupted teeth and encircling the necks of those that have erupted.
GINGIVITIS	Inflammation of gingival tissue without loss of connective tissue.
HALITOSIS	Bad breath.
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	Material inserted or grafted into tissue; dental implant – device especially designed to be placed surgically within or on the mandibular or maxillary bone as a means of providing for dental replacement.
INLAY	A dental restoration made outside of the mouth which corresponds to the prepared cavity, which is then cemented to the tooth.

LESION	An injury or wound; area of diseased tissue.
MAINTENANCE, PERIODONTAL	Therapy for preserving the state of health of the tissue surrounding the teeth.
MANDIBLE	Lower jaw.
MOLAR	Teeth posterior to the premolars (bicuspid) on either side of the jaw, grinding teeth, having large crowns and broad chewing surfaces.
OCCLUSION	Any contact between biting or chewing surfaces of maxillary (upper) and mandibular (lower) teeth.
ONLAY	A restoration made outside the mouth that replaces a cusp or cusps of the tooth, which is then cemented to the tooth.
ORAL	Pertaining to the mouth.
PARTIAL DENTURE	Usually refers to the prosthetic device that replaces the missing teeth on a framework that can be removed by the patient.
PERIODONTAL	Pertaining to the supporting and surrounding tissues of the teeth.
PERIODONTAL DISEASE	Infection and inflammation of the gingival tissues and/or periodontal membrane of the teeth, possibly producing periodontal pockets and loss of supporting bone.
PERIODONTAL POCKET	a feature of periodontal disease where the connecting tissue has lost its attachment leaving an abnormally deep “pocket” where bacteria and debris collect.
PERIODONTITIS	Inflammation and loss of the connective tissue of the supporting or surrounding structure of teeth with loss of attachment.
PLAQUE	A soft sticky substance that accumulates on teeth composed largely of bacteria and bacterial derivatives.
PROPHYLAXIS	Scaling and polishing procedure performed to remove plaque, calculus, and stains.
PROSTHESIS	Artificial replacement of any part of the body; dental prosthesis – any device or appliance replacing one or more missing teeth and/or, if required, associated structures. (This is a broad term which

	includes abutment crowns, and abutment inlays/onlays, bridges, dentures, obturators, gingival prostheses).
QUADRANT	One of the four equal sections into which the dental arches can be divided; begins at the middle of the arch and extends back to the last tooth.
RETAINER	The teeth used to support a bridge.
ROOT CANAL	The portion of the pulp cavity inside the root of the tooth; the chamber within the root of the tooth that contains the pulp.
ROOT CANAL THERAPY	The treatment of disease and injuries of the pulp.
ROOT PLANING	A procedure designed to remove microbial flora, bacterial toxins, calculus, and diseased cementum or dentin on the tooth surfaces and in the pocket.
SCALING	Removal of plaque, calculus, and stain from teeth.
TMJ	Temporomandibular joint – the connecting hinge mechanism between the mandible (lower jaw) and base of the skull (temporal bone).
TMJ DISFUNCTION	Abnormal functioning of temporomandibular joint; also refers to symptoms arising in other areas secondary to the disfunction.
VENEER	In the construction of crowns or pontics, a layer of tooth-colored material, usually, but not limited to, composite, porcelain, ceramic or acrylic resin, attached to the surface by direct fusion, cementation, or mechanical retention; also refers to a restoration that is luted to the tooth.
WHITENING	The process of whitening or bleaching teeth using dental products, either at home or in the dental office.
X-RAY	Radiograph.