



# DENTAL TERMINOLOGY

## DENTAL PROFESSIONALS

**Dental Specialist:** A dentist who has received postgraduate training in one of the recognized dental specialties: endodontics, orthodontics, oral surgery, pediatric dentistry, periodontics, and prosthodontics.

**DDS:** Doctor of Dental Surgery.

**DMD:** Doctor of Dental Medicine.

**Endodontist:** A dental specialist who treats diseases of the pulp and nerve of the tooth.

**General Dentist:** A primary dental care provider that performs preventive care as well as restorative procedures such as fillings, crowns, implants, and more.

**Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon:** A dental specialist who is most commonly known to remove teeth but also treats diseases, injuries, defects, and deformities of the oral and maxillofacial regions.

**Orthodontist:** A dental specialist who straightens or moves misaligned teeth and/or jaw.

**Pediatric Dentist:** A dentist who specializes in the diagnosis, treatment, and management of the oral health needs of children.

**Periodontist:** A dentist who specializes in diagnosing, managing, and treating the tissue, gums, and bones that support the teeth.

## MOUTH-RELATED TERMS

**Alveolar Bone:** The bone structure that contains tooth sockets and supports the teeth.

**Anatomical Crown:** The visible part of a natural tooth covered by enamel.

**Arch:** An upper or lower denture.

**Bicuspid:** A premolar tooth or a tooth with two cusps.

**Buccal:** The cheek area.

**Cementum:** Hard connective tissue covering the tooth root.

**Cusp:** The pointed portion of the tooth.

**Cuspid:** A tooth with one cusp located between the incisors and premolars. It is also known as a canine tooth.

**Deciduous Teeth:** The first set of teeth a child gets, also known as primary teeth or baby teeth. There are 20 deciduous teeth which are usually all in place around age 2.

**Dentin:** The portion of the tooth found beneath the enamel and cementum. A hard, calcified material that makes up the bulk of the tooth.

**Enamel:** Hard calcified tissue covering dentin on the crown of the tooth.

**Gingiva:** Soft tissues that lay over the crowns of unerupted teeth, also known as gum tissue.

**Interproximal:** Between the teeth.

**Intraoral:** Inside the mouth.

**Labial:** The area of or around the lip.

**Lingual:** Of or near the tongue.

**Lingual Surface:** The side of the tooth facing the tongue.

**Mandible:** The lower jaw.

**Maxilla:** The upper jaw.

**Molar:** The teeth that are posterior to the premolars on either side of the jaw and have broad chewing surfaces.

**Occlusal:** The relationship between the upper and lower teeth as they come in contact with each other.

**Palate:** The hard and soft tissue formed at the roof of the mouth that separates the oral and nasal cavities.

**Pulp:** Connective tissue containing nerve tissue and blood vessels that occupy the pulp cavity inside of the tooth.

**Quadrant:** One of the four equal sections in which the dental arches are divided, typically referred to as the upper and lower right and upper and lower left quadrants.

**Root:** The portion of the tooth that is located in the socket which is attached by the periodontal apparatus.

**Root Canal:** The chamber within the root of the tooth that contains pulp.

**Sublingual:** Under the tongue.

**Temporomandibular Joint (TMJ):** The connecting hinge between the base of the skull and the lower jaw.

**Unerupted:** Teeth that have not penetrated into the oral cavity.

**Wisdom Teeth:** The last teeth to come in during the mid to late teenage years. They are also called third molars.

## DENTAL CONDITIONS

**Abscess:** Localized buildup of pus in an area of infection, usually around the tooth or in the gums, that can ultimately destroy oral tissue.

**Abrasion:** Tooth wear caused by forces other than chewing such as improper brushing or holding objects between the teeth.

**Avulsion:** When a tooth is knocked out of its socket due to trauma.

**Bone Loss:** A decrease in the amount of bone that supports a tooth or implant.

**Bruxism:** An unconscious habit of grinding or clenching the teeth.

**Calculus:** A hard deposit of mineralized material sticking to the crowns and/or roots of teeth. This substance cannot be brushed off and is removed during a professional cleaning

**Caries:** Tooth decay. Tooth surfaces are slowly destroyed by acid-producing bacteria.

**Cavity:** An area of the tooth that is damaged by caries, abrasion, or erosion.

**Cleft Palate:** A birth defect that occurs when the tissues that make up the roof of the mouth do not join together completely.

**Decay:** The decomposition of the tooth structure.

**Dry Mouth:** A condition caused by lack of saliva and moisture in the mouth. If untreated, it can lead to increased levels of tooth decay and infections.

**Dry Socket:** Severe pain inside and around the tooth socket which can occur one to three days after a tooth extraction. This issue usually requires post-operative care.

**Erosion:** The wearing down of tooth structure, caused by chemicals and acid.

**Fracture:** The breaking of a tooth.

**Gingivitis:** Inflammation of gingival tissue.

**Impacted Tooth:** A partially erupted tooth positioned against another tooth, bone, or soft tissue, making complete eruption unlikely.

**Lesion:** An area of diseased tissue.

**Malocclusion:** Improper alignment of the upper and lower teeth.

**Peri-implantitis:** An infection that develops around an implant which can lead to bone loss.

**Periodontal Abscess:** An infection of the gum pocket that can destroy soft and hard tissues.

**Periodontitis:** The inflammation and loss of the connective tissue of the supporting structure of teeth.

**Plaque:** A soft and sticky substance that builds up on teeth due to bacteria buildup.

**Pulpitis:** Inflammation of the dental pulp.

**Recession:** When the gums pull away from the teeth, often exposing the root.

## PROCEDURE AND TREATMENT TERMS

**Abutment:** A natural tooth or implanted tooth substitute used to support a removable partial denture or bridge work.

**Alveoloplasty:** A surgical procedure that reshapes the jawbone.

**Anesthesia:** Medication administered to an individual prior to a procedure with the purpose of dulling pain or sedating the individual. Dentists most commonly use local anesthesia to numb the area where pain is likely to occur without changing the awareness of the individual undergoing the procedure.

**Apicoectomy:** A minor surgical procedure that removes the apex, or top, of the root of a tooth.

**Basic Cleaning (Prophylaxis):** A routine professional teeth cleaning to remove plaque build-up, tartar, and stains. This is a regularly scheduled preventative treatment for individuals with healthy gum tissue.

**Biopsy:** The process of removing tissue for histologic evaluation, an important tool in the accurate diagnosis of cancer and other diseases.

**Bonding:** A procedure in which a tooth-colored plastic material is applied with a special light, and ultimately "bonds" the material to the tooth to improve a person's smile.

**Bridge:** An appliance that replaces missing teeth by securely attaching an artificial tooth to the natural teeth. This is also known as a fixed partial denture.

**Composite:** A filling material used to repair teeth. The most common type of filling.

**Crown:** A cover that is put over a tooth to help restore the tooth's normal shape, size, and function. These are typically applied when individuals have a cavity too large for filling, a cracked or weakened tooth, or want to conceal a discolored or poorly shaped tooth.

**Crown Lengthening:** A surgical procedure that recontours gum tissue, and sometimes bone, to expose more of the tooth for a crown.

**Dental Prosthesis:** An artificial device that replaces missing teeth (Treatment Partial/Denture, Implant, Bridge)

**Extraction:** The act of removing a tooth or portions of a tooth.

**Simple Extraction:** This type of extraction does not require sectioning of the tooth or any other elaborate procedures for removal.

**Fluoride Varnish:** A liquid containing fluoride that is painted onto the teeth and hardens. It is used to prevent or reduce the risk of cavities.

**Full-Mouth X-Ray:** The combination of 14 or more periapical and bitewing films of the back teeth that reveal all of the teeth including the crowns, roots, and alveolar bone.

**Gingivectomy:** A surgical procedure for removing gingiva (gum tissue) in order to restore gum health.

**Gingivoplasty:** A surgical procedure for reshaping gingiva (gum tissue).

**Graft:** A piece of tissue or alloplastic material placed in contact with tissue in order to repair a deficiency.

**Immediate Denture:** A prosthesis constructed and placed immediately after the removal of natural teeth.

**Implant:** A device placed within or on the bone of the jaw or skull to support either a crown, bridge, denture, facial prosthesis or to act as an orthodontic anchor.

**Nightguard:** A removable device is worn over teeth at night to protect from damage due to clenching or bruxism.

**Overdenture:** A removable prosthetic device that covers and rests on one or more natural teeth, the roots of natural teeth, and/or dental implants.

**Partial Denture:** A prosthetic device used to replace missing teeth.

**Radiograph:** An image produced by projecting radiation. Also called an X-ray.

**Reline:** A procedure used to resurface the side of a denture that is not in contact with the soft tissue of the mouth to ensure a secure fit.

**Removable Partial Denture (Removable Bridge):** A prosthetic replacement used to replace missing teeth. This device can be removed by the individual.

**Retainer:** A removable device worn in the mouth to prevent teeth from shifting. These devices can be fixed or removable.

**Root Planing:** A procedure performed on tooth roots to remove dentin, bacteria, calculus, and diseased surfaces.

**Scaling:** The removal of plaque, calculus, and staining from teeth.

**Sealants:** Plastic resin placed on the biting surfaces of molars in order to prevent bacteria from attacking the enamel.

**Suture:** A stitch used to repair an incision or wound.

**Temporary Removable Denture:** An interim prosthesis designed to be used for a limited period of time.

**Veneer:** Thin coverings placed over the front part of teeth made to look like natural teeth.

## DENTAL INSURANCE TERMINOLOGY

**Annual Maximum:** The total dollar amount that a plan will pay for dental care for an individual member or family member (under a family plan) for a specified benefit period, typically a calendar year.

**Assignment of Benefits:** When a member authorizes the dental plan to forward payment for a covered procedure directly to a member's dentist.

**Claim/Claims Form:** Information a dentist submits to the dental plan to get paid for services performed for a member. A dentist is responsible for the accuracy of all information on a claim form.

**Coinsurance:** The percentage of the costs of services paid by the patient. For example, a benefit that is paid at 80% by the plan creates a 20% coinsurance obligation for a member.

**Contracted Fee:** The fee for each single procedure that a dentist has agreed to accept as payment in full for covered services provided to a member.

**Coordination of Benefits (COB):** When a member has more than one dental plan, this is the process that the plans use to determine the amount that each will pay.

**Copayment:** The member's share of payment for a given service. The co-payment is usually expressed as a percentage of a dentist's contracted fee but can be expressed as a member's preset share of payment for a given service.

**Deductible:** A dollar amount that each member must pay toward covered services before Delta Dental's benefits are paid. This is often referred to as the member's out-of-pocket costs.

**Explanation of Benefits (EOB):** A paper or electronic document provided by the insurance carrier detailing the dental treatments and services that were paid for on a member's behalf. It is different from a bill.

**Group:** A company or organization that provides dental plans to its employees. The group works with Delta Dental to select the plan type, maximums, benefit levels, and member eligibility.

**Fee Schedule:** A list of charges for specific dental treatments used to reimburse dentists on a fee-for-service basis.

**In-Network Dentist:** A dentist who has agreed to be a part of the insurance carriers' network and accepts pre-established fees for his or her professional dental services.

**Lifetime Maximum:** The maximum amount a plan will pay over the course of a lifetime. It may apply to an individual or a family and typically applies to specific treatments such as orthodontic treatment.

**Maximum Plan Allowance (MPA):** The amount set by the insurance carrier that the in-network dentist has agreed to charge for a service.

**National Provider Identifier (NPI):** A unique identification number used to identify a health care professional as an alternative to their dental license number.

**Subscriber/Member:** An individual who has signed up for dental coverage from the insurance carrier directly or through a Group.

**Network:** Consists of participating dentists who have signed up with the insurance carrier to provide dental treatment within certain administrative guidelines at agreed-upon fees.

**Pre-Treatment Estimate:** A treatment plan is usually submitted by a dentist for the insurance carrier to review and provide an estimate of benefits before treatment starts. This can help a member budget for dental procedures and decide how to proceed with treatment.

**Waiting Period:** A period of time before a member is eligible to receive benefits for all or certain treatments. It typically applies to expensive services such as dentures or crowns.