Glossary of Terms

Dentists use a lot of terms to describe problems and procedures. They would be glad to explain any term you don’t know, of course, but here are a few:

ABSCESS
Acute or chronic localized inflammation with a collection of pus, associated with tissue destruction and, frequently, swelling.

ABRASION
Tooth wear caused by forces other than chewing, such as improper brushing.

ABUTMENT
A tooth or implant used to support an artificial device replacing teeth.

ACID ETCHING
Applying an acid to the tooth-enamel surface to provide retention for bonding.

ALLOPLASTIC
Synthetic material used for tissue augmentation.

ALVEOLAR
The bone to which a tooth is attached.

ALVEOLOPLASTY
The recontouring of bone structures, usually in preparation for a prosthesis.

AMALGAM
A mixture of mercury, silver, tin, and copper used to fill cavities.

ANALGESIA
Loss of pain sensations without loss of consciousness.

ANESTHESIA

ANTERIOR
The teeth and tissues located towards the front of the mouth.

APEX
The tip or end of the root end of the tooth.

APICOECTOMY
Amputation of a tooth apex (root tip).

ARCH, DENTAL
Upper or lower jaw.

AVULSION
Separation of tooth from its socket due to trauma; scientific term for “having a tooth knocked out.”
BAND
A metal ring orthodontists cement to a tooth as part of the bracing process.

BICUSPID
A tooth with two cusps, usually a premolar tooth.

BILATERAL
Both sides.

BIOPSY
Process of removing tissue for evaluation.

BITEWING RADIOGRAPH
A side-view mouth X-ray.

BONDING
A composite resin that changes the shape or color of a tooth.

BRIDGE
A fixed partial denture replacing one or more missing teeth. Bridges can be fixed or removable.

BRUXISM
Grinding and/or clenching of teeth.

BUCCAL
Pertaining to or around the cheek.

CALCULUS
Hard mineralized plaque attached to crowns and/or roots of teeth.

CANAL
The space inside the root portion of a tooth containing pulp tissue; the passage which transmits vessels and nerves through the jaw.

CANTILEVER EXTENSION
Part of a fixed prosthesis supported at one end only.

CARIRES
Tooth decay.

CAVITY
Decay in tooth caused by caries; also referred to as carious lesion.

CEMENT BASE
Material used under a filling to replace lost tooth structure.

CEMENTUM
Hard connective tissue covering the tooth root.

CEPHALOMETRIC RADIOGRAPH
A full-head X-ray.

CLEFT PALATE
Congenital deformity resulting in lack of fusion of the soft and/or hard palate.
CLENCHING
The clamping and pressing of the jaws and teeth together, frequently associated with psychological stress or physical effort.

CLOSED REDUCTION
The repositioning of a fractured bone without surgery.

COMPOSITE
A dental restorative material.

COMPOUND FRACTURE
A broken bone exposed to external contamination.

COPING
A thin covering of a tooth crown applied as part of a restoration.

CORONAL
The crown of a tooth.

CROWN
A restoration that covers or “caps” a tooth to restore it to its normal shape and size. Anatomical crowns: The normal enamel covering of a tooth. Abutment crown: An artificial crown that supports a dental prosthesis. Artificial crown: A restoration that covers most or all of a tooth crown. Clinical crown: The part of a tooth not covered by supporting tissues.

CURETTAGE
Scraping or cleaning the walls of a cavity or gingival pocket.

CUSP
An extruded part of the chewing surface of a tooth.

CYST
A cavity containing fluid or soft matter.

DEBRIDEMENT
Removal of plaque, calculus and/or tissue.

DECAY
Caries lesions in a tooth resulting in decomposition of tooth structure.

DECIDUOUS
Used to describe primary (baby) teeth.

DENTAL PROPHYLAXIS
Scaling and polishing procedure that removes plaque, calculus, and stains.

DENTIN
The part of the tooth beneath enamel and cementum.

DENTITION
The teeth in the dental arch. Permanent dentition refers to permanent teeth; deciduous dentition refers to deciduous (baby) teeth.
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DENTURE
An artificial substitute for natural teeth and adjacent tissues.

DENTURE BASE
The part of a denture that contacts soft tissue and holds the artificial teeth.

DIAGNOSTIC CAST
Plaster or stone model of teeth and adjoining tissues; also referred to as study model.

DIASTEMA
A space, often used to refer to a space between adjacent teeth.

DIRECT PULP CAP
Covering exposed tooth pulp with a dressing or cement.

DISPLACED TOOTH
Partial loss of a tooth due to trauma.

DISTAL
Toward the back of the dental arch.

DRY SOCKET
Inflammation of the tooth socket following a tooth extraction.

EDENTULOUS
Without teeth.

ENAMEL
Hard calcified tissue covering dentin of the crown of tooth.

ENDODONTIST
A dental specialist who treats disease and injuries of the tooth pulp.

EQUILIBRATION
Reshaping the biting surfaces of teeth to create proper adjustment and alignment.

EVALUATION

EVULSION
Complete separation of the tooth from its socket due to trauma (avulsion). A knocked-out tooth.

EXCISION
Surgical removal of bone or tissue.
EXUDATE
A byproduct of inflammation or necrosis (death of tissue) containing fluid, cells, and/or other debris.

FACIAL
The surface of a tooth directed toward the face.

FILLING
The restoring of lost tooth structure using materials like metal, alloy, plastic, or cement.

FRACTURE
In dentistry, the breaking of a tooth.

FRENUM
Muscle fibers covered by a mucous membrane that attach the cheek, lips and/or tongue to associated structures.

FURCATION
The area of a multirooted tooth where the roots diverge.

GINGIVAE
The soft tissues overlying the crowns of unerupted teeth and encircling the necks of erupted teeth.

GINGIVECTOMY
The removal of gingiva.

GINGIVITIS
Inflammation of the gingival tissues.

GINGIVOPLASTY
A process that reshapes gingiva into a normal, functional form.

GRAFT
A piece of tissue or alloplastic material put in contact with tissue to repair a defect or supplement a deficiency.

HEMISECTION
Surgical separation of a multirooted tooth so that one root and/or the overlaying portion of the crown can be surgically removed.

HETEROLOGOUS
Made up of tissue not normal to the part.

IMAGING, DIAGNOSTIC
Includes, but is not limited to, CAT scans, MRIs, photographs, and X-rays.

IMMEDIATE DENTURE
Prosthesis that is placed immediately after removing natural teeth.

IMPACTED TOOTH
An unerupted or partially erupted tooth that is blocked from surfacing by another tooth, bone, or soft tissue.
**Glossary of Terms**

**IMPLANT**
A device placed surgically in bone as support for a prosthesis.

**IMPLANTATION, TOOTH**
Placement of an artificial or natural tooth into a socket.

**INDIRECT PULP CAP**
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.

**INLAY**
A dental restoration made outside of the mouth and then applied to a tooth.

**INTENTIONAL REIMPLANTATION**
The intentional removal, repair and replacement of a tooth into its socket.

**INTERPROXIMAL**
Between the adjoining surfaces of adjacent teeth.

**INTRACORONAL**
Within the crown of a tooth.

**INTRAORAL**
Inside the mouth.

**JAW**
A common name for either the maxilla or the mandible.

**LABIAL**
Pertaining to or around the lip.

**LESION**
An injury or wound; area of diseased tissue.

**LINE ANGLE**
Used to designate the junction of two tooth surfaces or two walls of a tooth-cavity preparation.

**LINGUAL**
Pertaining to or around the tongue.

**MAINTENANCE, PERIODONTAL**
Therapy for preserving the health of the periodontium.

**MALAR**
Pertaining to the cheek bone.

**MALIGNANT**
Cancerous.

**MALOCCLUSION**
Improper alignment of biting or chewing surfaces.
MANDIBLE
Lower jaw.

MAXILLA
The upper jaw.

MESIAL
Toward the midline of the dental arch.

MOLAR
Teeth back of the premolars (bicuspids) on either side of the jaw; grinding teeth, having large crowns and broad chewing surfaces.

MOULAGE
A wax or plaster cast-mold reproduction of the face.

ONLAY
A restoration made outside the mouth that replaces a tooth cusp or cusps.

ORAL
Pertaining to the mouth.

ORAL AND MAXILLOFACIAL SURGEON
A dental specialist who diagnoses and treats diseases, injuries, deformities, defects, and aesthetic aspects of the mouth and jaw.

ORAL PATHOLOGY
The specialty concerned with recognition, diagnosis, investigation, and management of diseases of the mouth, jaws, and adjacent structures.

ORTHODONTIST
A dental specialist who treats the misalignment of the teeth and their surrounding structures.

OSTEOPLASTY
Surgical procedure that modifies the bones in the jaws.

OSTEOTOMY
Surgical cutting of bone.

OVERDENTURE
Prosthetic device supported by retained teeth roots or implants.

NON-AUTOGENOUS
A graft from a donor other than the patient.

OBTURATOR
A prosthesis that closes an opening in the palate.

OCCLUSION
Any contact between biting or chewing surfaces of maxillary (upper) and mandibular (lower) teeth.

OCCLUSAL RADIOGRAPH
An X-ray where the film is held between the teeth.
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<th>Definition</th>
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<td><strong>PALATE</strong></td>
<td>The hard and soft tissues forming the roof of the mouth.</td>
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<td><strong>PALLIATIVE</strong></td>
<td>Action that relieves pain.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PANORAMIC RADIOGRAPH</strong></td>
<td>An X-ray that shows the entire upper and lower mouth and jaw on a single film.</td>
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<td><strong>PARTIAL DENTURE</strong></td>
<td>A prosthetic device that replaces missing teeth, designed to be removed by the patient.</td>
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<td><strong>PATIENT</strong></td>
<td>An individual who has established a professional relationship with a dentist for the delivery of dental care.</td>
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<td><strong>PEDIATRIC DENTIST</strong></td>
<td>A dental specialist who treats children; formerly known as a pedodontist.</td>
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<td><strong>PERIAPICAL</strong></td>
<td>The area surrounding the end of the tooth root.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PERIAPICAL RADIOGRAPH</strong></td>
<td>An X-ray made by placing film inside the mouth.</td>
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<td><strong>PERICORONAL</strong></td>
<td>Around the crown of a tooth.</td>
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<td><strong>PERIODONTAL</strong></td>
<td>Pertaining to the supporting and surrounding tissues of the teeth.</td>
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<td><strong>PERIODONTAL DISEASE</strong></td>
<td>Inflammation of the gingival tissues and/or periodontal membrane.</td>
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<td><strong>PERIODONTAL POCKET</strong></td>
<td>A deepened gingival fissure; a feature of periodontal disease.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PERIODONTIST</strong></td>
<td>A dental specialist who treats diseases of the supporting and surrounding tissues of the teeth.</td>
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<td><strong>PERIODONTITIS</strong></td>
<td>Inflammation and loss of the connective tissue of the surrounding structure of teeth.</td>
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<td><strong>PERIRADICULAR</strong></td>
<td>Surrounding a portion of the root of the tooth.</td>
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<td><strong>PLAQUE</strong></td>
<td>A soft sticky substance, composed largely of bacteria, that accumulates on teeth.</td>
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</table>
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PONTIC
The artificial tooth on a fixed partial denture (bridge).

POST
A metallic projection cemented within a prepared root canal to strengthen and retain restorative material.

POSTERIOR
Teeth and tissues towards the back of the mouth – i.e., premolars and molars.

PREMEDICATION
The use of medications prior to dental procedures.

PRIMARY DENTITION
The first set of teeth.

PROPHYLAXIS
A scaling and polishing procedure that removes 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 associated structures. Types of prostheses include: definitive prosthesis — a prosthesis to be used over an extended period of time; fixed prosthesis — non-removable tooth-borne dental prosthesis; interim prosthesis — a provisional prosthesis designed for use over a limited period of time; removable prosthesis — dental prosthesis designed to be removed and reinserted by the patient.

PROSTHODONTIST
A dental specialist who restores natural teeth and replaces missing teeth with artificial substitutes.

PROVISIONAL
A temporary prosthesis or individual tooth restoration.

PULP
The connective tissue containing blood vessels and nerves that occupies the pulp cavity of a tooth.

PULP CAVITY
The space within a tooth containing the pulp.

PULPECTOMY
Complete removal of pulp tissue from the root-canal space.

PULPITIS
Inflammation of the pulp.

PULPOTOMY
Surgical removal of a portion of the pulp with the aim of saving the remaining pulp.

QUADRANT
One of four equal sections into which the dental arches are divided.
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RADICULAR
Pertaining to the root.

RADIOPHANTH
X-ray.

REBASE
Refitting a denture by replacing the base material.

REIMPLANTATION, TOOTH
The return of a tooth to its socket.

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

RETAINER
A device used to stabilize teeth.

ROOT
The portion of the tooth that is covered by cementum and located in the alveolus (socket).

ROOT CANAL
The chamber within the root of the tooth that contains the pulp.

ROOT-CANAL THERAPY
The treatment of disease and injuries of the pulp and associated conditions.

ROOT PLANING
A procedure designed to remove microbial flora, bacterial toxins, calculus, and diseased cementum or dentin on the root surfaces and in the pocket.

SCALING
Removal of plaque, calculus, and stains from teeth.

SIALODOCHOPLASTY
Surgical procedure to repair and/or restore a portion of a salivary-gland duct.

SIALOGRAPHY
X-rays of the salivary ducts and glands.

SIALOLITHOTOMY
Surgical procedure to remove a stone within a salivary gland or its duct.

SPLINT
A device used to support, protect, or immobilize oral structures that have been loosened, replanted, fractured, or traumatized.

STOMATITIS
Inflammation of the mouth membranes.

STRESS BREAKER
Part of a tooth-borne and/or tissue-borne prosthesis designed to relieve the abutment teeth and their supporting tissues from stress.
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STUDY MODEL
Plaster or stone model of teeth and adjoining tissues; also referred to as diagnostic cast.

SUTURE
A stitch used to repair an incision or wound.

TEMPORARY REMOVABLE PARTIAL DENTURE
An interim prosthesis.

TEMPOROMANDIBULAR JOINT (TMJ)
The hinge between the mandible (lower jaw) and base of the skull (temporal bone).

TEMPOROMANDIBULAR JOINT DYSFUNCTION
Abnormal functioning of the TMJ.

TISSUE CONDITIONING
Material placed in contact with tissues for a limited time to help the tissues heal.

TRANSPLANTATION, TOOTH
Transfer of a tooth from one socket to another, either in the same or a different person.

TRISMUS
Restricted ability to open the mouth, usually due to inflammation.

UNERUPTED
Tooth/teeth that have not penetrated into the oral cavity.

UNILATERAL
One-sided.

VENEER
A layer of tooth-colored material attached to the tooth surface. Veneers may be made of porcelain, ceramic, composite, or acrylic resin.

X-RAY
Radiograph.

XEROSTOMIA
Decreased salivary secretion that produces a dry and sometimes burning sensation and/or tooth decay.

ZYGOMATIC BONE
A cheekbone.