

## GLOSSARY of DENTAL TERMS

### A

**Abscess:** Acute or chronic localized inflammation, probably with a collection of pus, associated with tissue destruction and, frequently, swelling; usually secondary to infection.

**Abutment:** A tooth or implant fixture used as a support for a prosthesis.

**Alloy:** Compound combining two or more elements having properties not existing in any of the single constituent elements. Sometimes used to refer to **amalgam**.

**Artificial crown:** Restoration covering or replacing the major part, or the whole of the clinical crown of a tooth, or implant.

### B

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

**Bilateral:** Occurring on, or pertaining to, both right and left sides.

**Bleaching:** Process of lightening of the teeth, usually using a chemical oxidizing agent applied externally to teeth.

**Bonding:** Process by which two or more components are made integral by mechanical and/or chemical adhesion at their interface.

**Bruxism:** Grinding of the teeth.

### C

**Calculus:** Hard deposit of mineralized substance adhering to crowns or roots of teeth or prosthetic devices.

**Canal:** Space inside the root portion of a tooth containing pulp tissue.

**Caries:** Commonly used term for tooth decay.

**Cavity:** Missing tooth structure. A cavity may be due to decay, erosion or abrasion.

**Cementum:** Hard connective tissue covering the outer surface of a tooth root.

**Clenching:** The clamping and pressing of the jaws and teeth together in centric occlusion, frequently associated with psychological stress or physical effort.

**Composite:** A dental restorative material made up of resin and quartz particles

**Coronal:** Refers to the crown of a tooth.

**Cosmetic Dentistry:** Those services provided by dentists solely for the purpose of improving the appearance when form and function are satisfactory and no pathologic conditions exist

**Crown:** An artificial replacement that restores missing tooth structure by surrounding the remaining coronal tooth structure, or is placed on a dental implant.

**Curettage:** Scraping and cleaning the walls of a real or potential space, such as a gingival pocket or bone, to remove pathologic material.

**Cusp:** Pointed or rounded eminence on or near the masticating surface of a tooth.

**Cuspid:** Single cusped tooth located between the incisors and bicuspid.

## D

**Debridement:** Removal plaque and calculus which obstructs the ability to perform an evaluation.

**Decay:** The lay term for carious lesions in a tooth; decomposition of tooth structure.

**Dentin:** Hard tissue which forms the bulk of the tooth and develops from the dental papilla and dental

**Denture:** A prosthetic for the edentulous maxillary or mandibular arch, replacing the full dentition. A complete denture usually includes six anterior teeth and eight posterior teeth.

**Dry socket:** Localized inflammation of the tooth socket following extraction due to infection or loss of blood clot.

## E

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

**Endodontics:** A branch of dentistry which is concerned with the study of the human dental pulp and periradicular tissues and diagnosis, prevention and treatment of diseases and injuries of the pulp and associated periradicular conditions.

**Endodontist:** A dental specialist who limits his/her practice to treating disease and injuries of the pulp and associated periradicular conditions.

**Evulsion:** Separation of the tooth from its socket due to trauma.

**Extraction:** The process or act of removing a tooth or tooth parts.

## F

**Filling:** A lay term used for the restoring of lost tooth structure by using materials such as metal, alloy, plastic or porcelain.

## G

**Gingiva:** Soft tissues overlying the crowns of unerupted teeth and encircling the necks of those that have erupted.

**Gingivectomy:** The excision or removal of gingiva.

**Gingivitis:** Inflammation of gingival tissue without loss of connective tissue.

## H

**HIPAA:** Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996.

## I

**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** – A device specially designed to be placed surgically within or on the mandibular or maxillary bone as a means of providing for dental replacement.

**Incisal:** Pertaining to the biting edges of the incisor and cuspid teeth.

**Incisor:** A tooth for cutting or gnawing; located in the front of the mouth in both jaws.

**Inlay:** A dental restoration, made outside the oral cavity to conform to the prepared cavity, which restores some of the occlusal surface of a tooth.

## L

**Laminate Veneer:** A thin covering of the facial surface of a tooth usually constructed of tooth colored material used to restore discolored, damaged, misshapen or misaligned teeth.

## M

**Malocclusion:** Improper alignment of biting or chewing surfaces of upper and lower teeth.

**Mandible:** The lower jaw.

**Maxilla:** The upper jaw.

**Molar:** Teeth posterior to the premolars (bicuspid) on either side of the jaw; grinding teeth, having large crowns and broad chewing surfaces.

**Mouth Guard:** Individually molded device designed primarily to be worn for the purpose of helping prevent injury to the teeth and their surrounding tissues. Sometimes called a mouth protector.

## O

**Occlusal:** Pertaining to the biting surfaces of the premolar and molar teeth or contacting surfaces of opposing teeth or opposing occlusion rims.

**Onlay:** A dental restoration made outside the oral cavity that covers one or more cusp tips and adjoining occlusal surfaces, but not the entire external surface. It is retained by luting cement.

**Orthodontist:** A dental specialist whose practice is limited to the interception and treatment of malocclusion and other skeletal abnormalities of the teeth and their surrounding structures.

**Over denture:** A removable prosthetic device that overlies and may be supported by retained tooth roots or implants.

## P

**Palate:** The hard and soft tissues forming the roof of the mouth that separates the oral and nasal cavities.

**Partial denture:** Usually refers to a prosthetic device that replaces missing teeth. See fixed partial denture or removable partial denture.

**Periodontal disease:** Inflammatory process of the gingival tissues and/or periodontal membrane of the teeth, resulting in an abnormally deep gingival sulcus, possibly producing periodontal pockets and loss of supporting alveolar bone.

**Periodontics:** Periodontics is that specialty of dentistry which encompasses the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of diseases of the supporting and surrounding tissues of the teeth or their substitutes and the maintenance of the health, function and esthetics of these structures and tissues.

**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.

**Posterior:** Refers to teeth and tissues towards the back of the mouth.

**Prophylaxis:** Removal of plaque, calculus and stains from the tooth structures.

**Pulp:** Connective tissue that contains blood vessels and nerve tissue which occupies the pulp cavity of a tooth.

## R

**Receding Gum:** A condition in which the gums separate from the tooth, allowing bacteria and other substances to attack the tooth's enamel and surrounding bone.

**Resin, acrylic:** Resinous material used as a denture base material for trays or for other restorations.

**Root:** The anatomic portion of the tooth that is covered by cementum and is located in the alveolus (socket) where it is attached by the periodontal apparatus; radicular portion of tooth.

**Root Canal:** The portion of the pulp cavity inside the root of a tooth; the chamber within the root of the tooth that contains the pulp.

**Root Planing:** A definitive treatment procedure designed to remove cementum and/or dentin that is rough, may be permeated by calculus, or contaminated with toxins or microorganisms.

## S

**Scaling:** Removal of plaque, calculus, and stain from teeth.

**Sealant:** A resinous material designed to be applied to the occlusal surfaces of posterior teeth to prevent occlusal caries.

**Splint:** A device used to support, protect, or immobilize oral structures that have been loosened, replanted, fractured or traumatized. Also refers to devices used in the treatment of TMJ.

## T

**Tartar:** A hardened substance that sticks to the tooth's surface. (Also known as calculus)

**Temporary Removable Denture:** An interim prosthesis designed for use over limited period of time.

**Temporomandibular (TMJ):** The connecting hinge mechanism between the base of the skull (temporal bone) and the lower jaw (mandible).

**Temporomandibular joint dysfunction (TMD or TMJD):** Abnormal functioning of temporomandibular joint; also refers to symptoms arising in other areas secondary to the dysfunction.

## U

**Unerupted:** Tooth/teeth that have not penetrated into the oral cavity.

## V

**Veneer:** A laminate applied or bonded to the tooth.

**Vertical Bitewing:** A dental image with a central projection on which the teeth can close, holding it in a vertical position for the radiographic examination of several upper and lower teeth simultaneously.

## W

**Whitening:** A process that employs special bleaching agents for restoring the color of teeth.

**Wisdom teeth:** Third set of molars that erupts in adolescence.