



Glossary of Terms

Abutment- In a fixed bridge, the tooth or teeth that anchor a bridge. This is as opposed to the pontic(s), which is the tooth or teeth that are being replaced.

Accounts Receivable- Also known as A/R. The amount of outstanding collectible money, whether from a patient or insurance company.

ADA Procedure Codes- The codes by which procedures are classified as established by the ADA. These codes are separated into different categories of treatment. They are also used to file procedures with insurance companies.

Amalgam- A metal-based filling.

Anterior- The teeth toward the front of the mouth. They are numbered 6-11 and 22-27.

Assignment of Benefits- This allows the patient's benefits to go directly to the provider from the insurance company. The insured must agree to allow this.

Basic Procedures- One of the three classifications of insurance coverage. It usually consists of fillings, root canals, perio procedures. These procedures are typically covered at 80%, but you should always check before determining benefits.

Bicuspid- Also known as a pre-molar. They are located between the anterior teeth and the molars.

Bitewing x-rays- X-Rays taken to show the posterior teeth.

Bridge- A fixed appliance used to replace a missing tooth or teeth.

Buccal- The part of the posterior tooth that faces the cheek.

Build-up- Procedure done to add more surface area to a tooth.

Calculus- Hardened plaque that builds up and causes gum disease.

Canine- Tooth numbers 6, 11, 22 and 27. They are the teeth just in front of the bicuspids.

Case Presentation- The process of telling a patient the treatment he or she requires.

Cash Patient- A patient without insurance coverage.

Cast Post- A procedure done to stabilize a tooth.

Collection Percentage- The amount of treatment dollars produced that is collected. It is calculated by dividing \$ collected by \$ produced.

Complete Denture- A removable prosthesis used to replace all of the teeth in one or both jaws. Also known as a full denture.

Complex (surgical) extraction- An extraction that requires surgery and sutures.

Composite- A glass-based resin filling that can be made to match the natural color of the tooth.

Coordination of Benefits- How the insurance companies pay when one person has two different dental insurance policies.

Co-payment- The patient's out-of-pocket expense after the insurance benefits have been taken into account.

Cosmetic Dentistry- Dentistry done purely to improve the look of a patient's teeth/smile.

Crown- 1. The part of the tooth that is visible in the mouth. 2. A restoration that covers the entire top of the tooth; usually gold or tooth colored material. Also called a cap.

Deciduous Teeth- Baby teeth

Deductible- The amount of out-of-pocket expense a patient must pay before the insurance company will begin paying for treatment.

Diagnostic Models- The models made to determine the best course of treatment. They are made from impressions taken from the patient's natural teeth. Also known as Study Models.

Distal- The part of the teeth facing the back of the mouth.

DOB- Date of Birth.

DOS- Date of service.

Effective Date- The date that an insurance policy goes into effect.

Endodontics- Dental specialty which deals with the diagnosis and treatment of the pulp; the tissue within the tooth and the root canals.

EOB- Explanation of benefits. The report from the insurance company stating what they paid and why.

Extraction- The removal of a tooth.

Facial- The surface of the anterior teeth facing the cheek.

Financial Arrangement- FA. The arrangement made with a patient for payment.

Fluoride- A treatment intended to strengthen the natural tooth.

Full Mouth X-Ray- Usually 14 periapical x-rays and 4 bitewings. The x-rays, when put together in order, give a detailed picture of the teeth and bone surrounding the teeth.

Gingiva- The gums.

Gingivitis- A slight infection of the gum tissue. One of the first signs of gum disease.

Immediate Denture- A complete denture placed at the time of extraction of the teeth.

Implant- A procedure done to replace a tooth without having to attach it to another. It has its own prosthetic root and crown.

Impression- A mold taken of the existing teeth. Diagnostic models are made from an impression.

Incisal- The biting edge of incisors.

Incisor- The front teeth. Tooth numbers 7-10 and 23-26.

Initial Exam- An exam done on a patient the first time he or she is seen in an office.

Inlay- A permanent, lab-created restoration made from composite or porcelain material.

Lingual- the surface of the tooth that lies along the tongue.

Major Procedures- One of the three classifications of insurance coverage. It usually consists of crowns, bridges, dentures. These procedures are usually covered at 50%, but you should always verify this before determining benefits.

Mandible- The lower jaw.

Maryland Bridge- A bridge done to replace a missing tooth using “wings” attached to the lingual surface of adjacent teeth instead of using abutments.

Maxilla- The upper jaw.

Mesial- The part of the tooth facing the center of the mouth.

Molar- The largest of the teeth in the back of the mouth used for grinding.

Nitrous Oxide- Also known as laughing gas. The gas used to calm nervous patients. It is mixed with oxygen and the patient breathes it during the procedure.

Occlusal- The biting surface of the tooth.

Onlay- A permanent, lab-created restoration made from composite or porcelain material. The difference between an inlay and an onlay is that an onlay includes a cusp of the tooth.

Operative- An appointment where fillings are done.

Operatory- The room in which treatment is done.

Oral Surgery- Treatment related to extractions or the repair of an area due to the loss of a tooth, usually involving the jaw.

Orthodontics- The specialty which deals with the prevention, correction and/or treatment of misalignment of the teeth and jaws.

Palliative Treatment- Treatment done to immediately relieve pain, usually done on an emergency basis.

Panoramic X-Ray- A single film showing, in one view, all of the teeth and the surrounding structure of the mouth and jaws.

Partial denture- A removable appliance used to replace one or more missing teeth in the same jaw.

Pedodontics- That dental specialty dealing with the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of dental disorders in children.

Periapical X-Ray- An x-ray that focuses on a specific tooth or teeth. Also known as a pa.

Periodontal Charting- The process of measuring the distance from the gums to the supporting bone underneath.

Periodontal Disease- A chronic inflammation of the gums with pus formation and bleeding. Also known as pyorrhea. It is the main cause of tooth loss.

Periodontal Maintenance- The regular cleanings performed on a patient that has had treatment for periodontal disease.

Periodontal Scaling- A procedure performed that deep cleans under the gums to remove plaque and begin treating gum infection.

Plaque- The sticky film of food and bacteria that builds up on the teeth.

Pontic- In a fixed bridge the tooth or teeth being replaced. They are permanently connected to the abutments.

Posterior- The back teeth.

Pre-Determination/ Pre-Estimate- The pre-authorizing of a claim. The claim is sent in before the procedure is done to determine the approximate amount of coverage for a procedure.

Pre-Med- Antibiotic treatment before a procedure. The purpose is to prevent bacteria from entering the bloodstream from the mouth in cases of patients with specific health problems or histories. These include conditions such as heart disease, heart murmur (specifically Mitral Valve Prolapse), joint replacement or Rheumatic Fever.

Preventative Procedures- One of the three classifications of insurance coverage. It usually consists of cleanings, exams and x-rays. These procedures are usually covered at 80% - 100%, but you should always verify this before determining benefits.

Primary Insurance- The patient's main insurance company. If the person has more than one insurance policy this is the one that is filed first, as determined by the Birthday Rule.

Prophylaxis- "Prophy." The professional cleaning of the teeth to remove all accumulated plaque, light calculus and stains. It is performed in cases where no periodontal disease exists.

Prosthodontics- The dental specialty which deals with the replacement of missing teeth and supporting dental structures with crowns, bridgework, partials, dentures or implants.

Quadrants- The division of the mouth into four equal parts.

R & C- Reasonable and customary, also known as usual and customary. This is the determination of the insurance company of a maximum that the company will pay out for a procedure.

Recall- A term used to indicate an office visit for a patient who is coming in for his/her regular, usually 3 or 6-month, cleaning and check-up.

Recession- The measurable amount of gum loss along the crown of a tooth.

Recurrent Decay- The decay that is present around an existing restoration.

Responsible Party- The person responsible for the payment of a bill.

Root Canal Therapy- An endodontic treatment where the pulp (nerve) of the tooth is removed and the canals cleaned due to the nerve being infected and/or dead.

Sealant- A thin plastic coating bonded to the occlusal grooves of the teeth, usually in children, for the purpose of preventing decay.

Secondary Insurance- An insurance policy that a patient has other than his or her primary insurance. This is usually a spouse's insurance coverage when the patient has his or her own policy.

Simple Extraction- An extraction done without surgery or sutures.

SOF- Signature on File. Most insurance companies will allow assignment of benefits to the provider with SOF on the claim as long as a patient has signed an assignment of benefits form in the office.

Study Models- See Diagnostic Models.

Temporary Crown- A crown made in the office that protects the tooth once it is prepared for a crown, cemented to the tooth with a temporary bonding agent.

TMJ- Temporomandibular Joint. The jaw joint located just in front of the ear on either side of the face.

TMJ Dysfunction- Any number of abnormal or disease processes which affect the temporomandibular joint.

Tooth Number- Each tooth has a corresponding number, 1-32, starting with the Wisdom Tooth on the top right and ending with the Wisdom Tooth on bottom right.

UCR - Usual, Reasonable and Customary, also known as “Usual and Customary” or “Reasonable and Customary.” This is the determination of the insurance company of a maximum that the company will pay out for a procedure.

Veneer- Porcelain material bonded to the facial surfaces of anterior teeth for cosmetic purposes.

Wisdom Tooth- Any one of the last molars in the mouth. These may or may not come in through the gums. Also known as 3rd molars.

Annual/Yearly Maximum Benefits- The maximum amount that an insurance company will pay for a patient’s treatment during a policy year.

Please Note: This course, provided by DDS Success, LLC, and its accompanying materials is being provided as suggestions and ideas from which to improve the success and viability of your practice. This is not to be taken as a guarantee that the information provided is appropriate to your practice. Due to the high ethical standard in business expected of DDS Success, LLC clients, it is assumed that each client and/or their staff would observe and follow applicable laws relating to employment, taxation and general business. Each practice, their owners, officers and staff are individually responsible for ensuring that any system implemented complies with the applicable federal, state and local laws, rules and regulations governing the place in which your practice is located. These suggestions do *not* constitute legal advice. You should seek advice from your own legal advisors as to what is appropriate to implement in your practice, prior to implementation. DDS Success, LLC is not responsible for any claims, real or otherwise, associated with this material and information or any part thereof.