

## ABC of dentistry

### Classification of Tooth Position

To help dentists quickly describe a patient's teeth and the way they come together, certain normal and abnormal situations have been described and classified, and these are used for communication and defining the case. The man who invented this system was an American orthodontist called Edward Angle. ( 1855-1930 ). The system is known as Angles Classification

#### Class I Occlusion

This is considered the 'normal' or ideal situation in which the teeth come together. There are various ways of describing and defining the situation, but the most important is by the way the first molars, (the first 'double' or 'chewing' teeth), meet together when the mouth is closed.

In the Class I situation, the lower first molar is slightly in front of the upper first molar by what is known as 'half a unit' when the teeth are held together. This Class I relationship is also reflected often in the position of the front teeth, and the way they overlap one another, slightly forward ( 2-4mm ) and slightly deeper ( also 2-4mm ) than the incisal, or biting edge, of the lower ones.

#### Class II Occlusion

The Class II situation is divided into two sub-divisions, also called Division 1 and Division 2.

The class II situation is that where the first molar teeth are in line with one another, or the bottom tooth is even behind the upper first molar tooth when the mouth is closed and the teeth are held together. This situation often occurs when the bottom jaw lies further back than it should, in relation to the upper one. The sub-divisions help describe the common conditions arising in the front teeth when the first molar teeth are in the position described above.

In Division 1 the top teeth come out further forward than they should so that there is an increased gap between them and the lower front teeth. This is a very common situation, and easily recognizable because the front teeth look as if they 'stick out'.

In Division 2 the back teeth are in the class II position, and the front teeth then slope backwards from their normal position to compensate for this. Often the front top teeth overlap the front bottom teeth quite deeply when they come together.

#### Class III

In this situation, the lower first molar teeth are more forward than they should be in relation to the upper first molar teeth when they come together. They may still bite together when the mouth is closed, but in extreme cases, they don't meet together at all.

The front teeth usually reflect what is happening in the back teeth in the class III situation. The bottom front teeth lie forward from their ideal position, and in some cases, may lie completely in front of the upper front teeth when the mouth is closed together. People who have this type of Class III occlusion usually have it in association with a forwardly positioned or enlarged lower jaw. This type of malocclusion is quite easy to recognize because the person looks like they have a large or prominent chin.

#### Classification of Jaw position

There are also divisions called Class 1, 2, and 3, relating to the positions of a persons jaw bones which are used to classify and describe a situation. These are called the Skeletal classifications, and run usually, but not always, in a similar way to the Angle's classifications. Eg. a person with a Class 3 skeletal relationship often has a Class III Angle's relationship too. The definitions of skeletal relationships are more technically defined than the Angle's classification. X-rays of the skull and jaw bones are normally required for measurement of various normal lengths and angles.