

## Dental ABC

### Rubber Dam

A rubber dam is a sheet of latex rubber which is placed over teeth during treatment to isolate them from the rest of the mouth. It is an extremely useful way to keep the area of work clean and safe, and also prevents the patient from inhaling or swallowing instruments which may be dangerous. It should always be used during root canal treatment. During the removal of old amalgam fillings, it may be used to reduce the amount of metal swallowed, and therefore the contamination to the patient. The dam is held in place usually by a little clamp around the tooth or teeth, as well as dental floss, and is removed after treatment.

### Scaler

A scaler is an instrument used by hand to remove plaque and calculus from tooth surfaces above the gum-line.

### Scaling and Root Planning

Scaling involves the removal of plaque and calculus from tooth surfaces. It removes these irritants to the gum tissues and allows healing to occur. Scaling below the gum line is often referred to as a deep clean.

Scaling is often combined with root planning. Root planning is the meticulous cleaning and smoothing of root surfaces.

### Sealant

A sealant is a protective coating formed by resin bonded into the deep pit and fissure grooves on the occlusal (biting) surfaces of molar and premolar teeth. A sealant helps to prevent formation of decay by blocking the accumulation of food, debris and bacteria in these vulnerable areas.

### Serial Extraction

This is an orthodontics procedure in which primary or deciduous teeth are removed over a period of years in a particular sequence to prevent or relieve overcrowding of the permanent teeth when they erupt or come through into the mouth. At the end of a serial extraction procedure, it may still be necessary to remove some permanent teeth, but the crowding will have been localized, and the orthodontic treatment then needed will be less than otherwise would have been necessary.

### Space maintainer

A removable or fixed appliance designed to maintain an existing space in a dental arch. Space maintainers are usually fitted in children when they have lost deciduous or baby teeth early, and the gap left needs to be held open to allow the permanent or adult tooth to erupt in the correct position. There are many different designs of space maintainer, and the materials normally used are metal or acrylic.

### Sterilization

This is a process in which a surface or instrument is rendered free from viable (living) germ life (bacteria, virus and fungi). The most effective way to achieve this state is by using an autoclave which heats to 136°C. All instruments in a dental practice should be sterilized before use between the patients the dentist sees. This is to prevent contamination and cross infection.

### Help Please!!!!

If you have a dental emergency which need to be dealt with on that day call us before 10.00 am. This way we can accommodate everyone who needs to be seen as soon as possible. Calling in the afternoon will probably mean leaving the problem to be treated the next day. Also, we close one afternoon each week for essential cleaning and maintenance to the surgery.

**Obviously emergencies due to trauma or a child in pain will be dealt with at any time.**