

Faculty Of Medicine

Dentistry department

English course

Dental Vocabulary

One of the fun parts of learning dental/medical terminology is making difficult, long, impressive-looking words understandable. By learning what the word parts mean, it is much easier to understand what a brand new word is, even if you have never seen or heard it before. Most medical terms originated in either Greek or Latin, so when someone says, "It's Greek to me" . . . it really is!

arch : describes the alignment of the upper or lower teeth

bicuspid or pre-molar: transitional teeth behind the cuspids (canines)

cuspid or canine: the four "eye teeth"

decay: destruction of tooth structure caused by toxins produced by bacteria

deciduous teeth: commonly called "baby teeth," the first set of (usually) twenty teeth

dentin: inner layer of tooth structure, immediately under the surface enamel

dentition: the arrangement of natural or artificial teeth in the mouth

denture: removable (partial or complete) set of artificial teeth

denturism: the production of dentures dispensed directly by laboratory technicians

diastema: open space between teeth

DMD: Doctor of Medical Dentistry - equivalent to DDS

exodontia: practice of dental extractions

explorer: sharp instrument used to detect decay on the surface of teeth

extraction: removal of a tooth

eyeteeth: the four upper and lower canine (cuspid) teeth

incisors: four upper and four lower front teeth, excluding the cuspids (canine teeth)

lesion: injury of bodily tissue due to infection, trauma or neoplasm

malocclusion: "bad bite" or misalignment of the upper and lower teeth

mandible: the lower jaw

mastication: process of chewing food

maxilla: the upper jaw

molars: three back teeth in each dental quadrant used for grinding food.

nerve (root) canal: dental pulp; the internal chamber of a tooth

nerve: tissue that conveys sensation, temperature, position information to the brain

occlusion: closure; relationship of the upper and lower teeth upon closure

oral and maxillofacial surgery: surgical procedures on the mouth including extractions, removal of cysts or tumors, and repair of fractured jaws

oral cavity: the mouth

oral hygiene: process of maintaining cleanliness of the teeth and related structures

palate: hard and soft tissue forming the roof of the mouth

pathology: study of disease

pedodontics or pediatric dentistry: dental specialty focusing on treatment of children

periapical (PA): region at the end of the roots of teeth

permanent teeth: (usually) thirty-two adult teeth in a complete dentition

plaque: soft sticky substance that accumulates on teeth; composed of bacteria and food debris due to inadequate dental hygiene

root: tooth structure that connects the tooth to the jaw

saliva: clear lubricating fluid in the mouth containing water, enzymes, bacteria, mucus, viruses, blood cells and undigested food particles

tartar: common term for dental calculus, a hard deposit that adheres to teeth; produces rough surface that attracts plaque

trauma: injury caused by external force, chemical, temperature extremes, or poor tooth alignment