

Behind the Code

How Do We Report Smoothing Teeth?

Smoothing, reshaping, re-contouring, or discing teeth may be performed for a variety of reasons. The following are just a few of the many questions AAPD has received recently about how to report such procedures.

Question 1:

We re-contour a lot of teeth in our office and have always used the occlusal adjustment code because that is the closest code we can find. However, I am worried that I may be billing these incorrectly. Any advice?

Question 2:

We have a question about “smoothing teeth.”

What code should we bill if a patient wants the incisal edges of anterior teeth re-contoured for cosmetic reasons? Is there a code for enameloplasty?

Question 3:

What code should we report when reshaping a root?

Question 4:

What code do we report when asked by an orthodontist to reduce the mesial and distal surfaces of primary or permanent teeth?

Question 5:

We have a new dentist in our practice and need to code procedures that we have not charged for in the past. What code do we use when smoothing a chipped tooth that has no decay and does not need a restoration?

Answer:

In each of the situations listed above, the following code can be reported in addition to a limited, problem focused evaluation (D0140), if not previously evaluated/diagnosed:

D9971 odontoplasty 1-2 teeth; includes removal of enamel projections. D9971 is reported once for adjusting up to two teeth. If three teeth are treated, D9971 is reported twice. While dental plans may deny D9971 as cosmetic in nature, several of our carrier contacts report that they pay on this code in certain situations which is typically trauma and accident related scenarios.

For more information, please contact the AAPD Dental Benefits Manager Mary Essling at (312) 337-2169, ext. 36, or at messling@aapd.org.

Dental Insurance Symposium

Save the date: Friday, May 28, for the AAPD Dental Insurance Symposium to be held during the 63rd Annual Session in Chicago. This symposium will be held from 1 to 2:30 p.m. at the Chicago Hilton and Towers. Meet up with your fellow colleagues for a presentation from the American Dental Association's Legal Division; Contract Analysis Service (CAS): A Practical Guide to Participating Provider Contracts. Ahmed Elganzouri, Esq., will present an overview on what every dentist should know about participating provider contracts. In addition, you will hear from experts in the field of dental insurance reimbursement and learn about the recent trends and how these related matters may affect your bottom line.

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