



What to Expect When Getting Dental Impressions

Dental impressions are needed for many common dental procedures.

Dental Procedures Requiring Impressions

Dental impressions are a mold of your mouth used to create an exact replica of the oral cavity as a 3D model. Dental impressions are a vital step in restorative, prosthodontics, and orthodontic procedures including:

- Inlays and onlays
- Crowns and bridges
- Removable partials
- Dentures
- Mouth guards
- Custom teeth-whitening trays
- Braces, retainers, and other types of orthodontia

Types of Dental Impressions

Your dentist may do an impression of the entire arch (upper teeth or lower teeth only) or just a section of the mouth depending on the treatment plan (crown, bridge, or orthodontia etc.). There are three types of impressions:

- Bite registration impressions show the relationship of the upper and lower arch when you naturally bite together
- Preliminary impressions are generally taken with alginate material (seaweed-based powder) for the purpose of diagnosis, treatment planning, or fabricating a custom appliance (mouth guard, teeth whitening tray, or ortho-retainer etc.)
- Final impressions provide details of the tooth and surrounding structures. They are used to make casts and dies to design dental prosthesis: crown, bridge, partial, or denture

Impressions may be achieved traditionally with an impression tray and materials or digitally, utilizing state-of-the art scanning technology.

The entire process of completing an impression takes only a couple minutes, though may seem like much longer as it is not always the most comfortable of experiences.



How to Manage Gagging

The type of dental work getting done will determine: impression tray type, amount of impression materials used, which teeth and surrounding structures will be included in the impression. Let your dentist know if you have a sensitive gag reflex, as proactive measures can be taken to ensure you feel more comfortable:

- Numbing spray
- Nitrous Oxide (laughing gas)

Other tips to help manage gagging:

- Focus on breathing through the nose
- Lean forward
- Listen to relaxing music
- Shift your focus elsewhere

Impressions are considered an inclusive procedure, meaning that they are used in preparation for a dental procedure, so the cost for the impression should be included in the charge for the actual procedure. As the cost for the impressions are included with the procedure, impressions are not covered separately by your benefit plan.

What to Expect at an Impression Appointment

Take a deep breath and relax! Once you are seated in the chair for an impression, the dentist or his assistant will:

- Fit your upper and lower arch for appropriate tray size
- Load the tray with impression material
- Place the tray in your mouth, let the material set, and pull the tray out
- Send your impression to the lab
- If acquired digitally, the dentist will apply a liquid solution, powder, scan the area of impression, and rinse
- Tray material and impression material used will depend on the impression's purpose



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