

# Glossary of Terms

## Aspiration Pneumonia

An inflammation of the lungs and airways to the lungs (bronchial tubes) due to inhalation of the bacteria and debris (foreign material) from the oropharyngeal (mouth and throat) area or the gastric (stomach) contents.

Aspiration pneumonia is among several other types of pneumonias called “nosocomial pneumonias,” which mean they are acquired in a hospital or healthcare facility. Ventilator associated pneumonia (VAP) is another common nosocomial pneumonia.

## Bacteremia

Presence of microorganisms in the bloodstream.

## Cachexia (Wasting Syndrome)

A loss of body mass that cannot be reversed nutritionally. A loss of weight, muscle atrophy, fatigue, weakness, and significant loss of appetite in someone who is not actively trying to lose weight. Seen in patients with cancer, AIDS, chronic obstructive lung disease, multiple sclerosis, congestive heart failure, etc.

## Candida/Candidiasis (Thrush)

Fungal infection of the oral cavity caused by candida albicans. Also known as thrush atrophic candidiasis. Is characterized by erythematous pebbled patches on the hard or soft palate, buccal mucosa or dorsal surface of tongue.

## Cementum

A mineralized substance covering the root of a tooth. Its main role is to provide a place where the periodontal ligaments can attach to the tooth for stability.

## Clasp

A metal clip on a partial denture that fastens to a tooth to hold the denture in the mouth.

## Cellulitis

A spreading inflammation of sub-cutaneous or connective tissue in the body, characterized by fever, pain, swelling, and redness of the affected area.

## Dementia

Not a disease; it is a group of symptoms that include: memory loss, confused thinking, language

and judgment and unusual changes in behavior. Dementia typically affects individuals over 65 years of age.

## Dental Assistant

A person trained and licensed to help the dentist or dental hygienist in performing dental procedures.

## Dental Biofilm (Common Term: Dental Plaque)

A more accurate term for dental plaque; the two terms can be used interchangeably. Colonies of bacteria, yeast, fungi and debris in a sticky film that adheres to the teeth. Dental biofilm must be mechanically removed from all surfaces of the teeth or dentures every 24 hours. Dental biofilm (dental plaque) is commonly resistant to antibiotics.

## Dental Calculus (Common Term: Tartar)

Dental biofilm that is not removed daily and remains on the teeth combines with minerals to form dental calculus. Dental calculus is a hard substance that can form above and below the gumline. Dental calculus cannot be removed with a toothbrush: it must be removed professionally by a dental hygienist or dentist.

## Dental Caries

An infectious, chronic, dental disease caused by bacteria. It is characterized by the acid dissolution of enamel on teeth and eventual breakdown of the more organic, inner dental tissues.

## Dental Erosion

Loss of tooth structure as a result of chemical agents such as gastric reflux contents, soda, medications, etc.

## Dental Hygienist

A person trained and licensed to provide preventive dental services, such as cleanings, periodontal treatment, and oral hygiene education.

## Dental Plaque

Colonies of bacteria, yeast, fungi and debris in a sticky film that adheres to the teeth; commonly resistant to antibiotics. Dental plaque must be mechanically removed from all surfaces of the teeth or from dentures every 24 hours. Dental plaque is the cause of dental decay and most gum diseases.

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## **Dental Prosthesis (Prostheses, plural)**

Any type of replacement for missing natural teeth. A Dental Prosthesis can be cemented in, as in bridgework, or may be removable, as in full or partial dentures.

## **Dentist**

A person who is trained and licensed to practice dentistry.

## **Denture Adhesive**

A paste or powder used to help improve retention of dentures in the mouth if they seem loose.

## **Denture Brush**

A special brush designed only for cleaning of full or partial dentures. Denture brushes are not the same as toothbrushes used for natural teeth, since they usually have larger heads and stiffer bristles.

## **Denture Relining**

A procedure done by the dentist in which a denture is refitted to the gums by adding additional denture material inside. Relines can either be hard or soft and done either in the dental office or by a dental laboratory.

## **Diabetes**

A disease that affects the body's ability to produce or use insulin, which is a hormone. Two Main Types: *Type I* (aka Juvenile Diabetes) – insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus; body does not produce enough insulin. *Type II* (sometimes referred to as "Adult Onset Diabetes") – non-insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus.

## **Dysgeusia (taste alteration)**

An impairment of the sense of taste.

## **Dysphagia**

Difficulty in swallowing.

## **Fluoride**

A basic chemical element that has been proven to prevent cavities in adults and children. Fluoride can be applied to the teeth in toothpastes, gels, mouthwashes and in water and strengthens tooth structure by making it more resistant to acid attack. People who are getting cavities can often benefit from additional fluoride for their teeth.

## **Gingiva (gums)**

The anatomical technical name for the gums of the mouth. The gingiva are made up of epithelial tissue that is attached to the bones of the jaw and surrounds and supports the bases of the teeth.

## **Gingival Enlargement (gingival hyperplasia)**

An increase in the size of the gingiva (gums). Gingival enlargement can be caused by a number of factors, including inflammatory conditions and the side effects of certain medications.

## **Gingivitis (common term: gum disease)**

Dental plaque that is not removed daily will infect the gums and create inflammation, known as gingivitis. Gingivitis is characterized by redness, bleeding, swelling and sometimes pain.

## **Gums**

The firm pink outer tissue covered by mucous membrane that surrounds the teeth and covers the bone of the jaws.

## **Gum Disease**

The common term for periodontal disease.

## **Gum Recession**

Gradual loss of gum tissue that exposes the roots of the teeth and can lead to root caries (cavities).

## **Lichenoid**

A hypersensitivity reaction of oral mucosal tissues sometimes resembling Lichen Planus. Lesions may exhibit white striations or ulcerations and are frequently medication related.

## **Ludwig's Angina**

A type of cellulitis that involves the floor of the mouth, under the tongue. It often occurs after an infection of the roots of the teeth (such as tooth abscess) or a mouth injury. Swelling of the tissues occurs quickly. It may block the airway or prevent you from swallowing saliva.

## **Mucositis or Stomatitis**

Inflammation of the oral mucosa caused by pathologic microorganisms or physical or chemical injury from a foreign substance (e.g., direct cytotoxic action of chemotherapeutic agents on the oral mucosa resulting in atrophy or thinning of the oral mucosa, erythema, and ulceration).

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## **Osteonecrosis**

Severe bone disease that affects the maxilla and mandible. The exposure of the maxillary or mandibular bone through lesions in the gingiva that do not heal. Osteonecrosis of the jaws can be associated with Bisphosphonate therapy (usually IV therapy), radiation therapy to the head and neck area (cancer therapy), and other toxic agents.

## **Periodontal Disease (Common Terms: Gum Disease, Pyorrhea)**

Periodontal disease has some of the same signs and symptoms as gingivitis, which are redness, swelling, and bleeding. If gingivitis is not treated, the infection (caused by specific microorganisms) progresses to the bone that supports the tooth in the socket. This infection causes the bone to be destroyed and the tooth (or teeth) can become very loose and mobile. The gums may be painful and the bleeding may lead to hemorrhaging. Pus (exudate) may also be present.

## **Polypharmacy**

A term used to describe when a person is prescribed multiple medications, often uncoordinated, and is therefore at risk for drug interactions and side effects.

## **Xerostomia**

Dryness of the mouth caused by diminished function of the salivary glands due to aging, disease, drug reaction, etc.

## **Xylitol**

A sugar substitute, safe for diabetics, that does not contribute to caries. (Note: See Supplementary Materials for “Xylitol Fact Sheet” and additional information.)

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