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AAE members may reprint this position statement for distribution to patients or referring dentists.

About This Document

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Dental Dams

AAE Position Statement

The American Association of Endodontists is dedicated to excellence in the art and science of endodontics and to the highest standards of patient care. The accumulated clinical knowledge and judgment of the practitioner supported by evidence-based scientific research is the basis for endodontic treatment. **Tooth isolation using the dental dam is the standard of care**; it is integral and essential for any nonsurgical endodontic treatment.

A dental dam is a latex or nonlatex sheet with a hole punched in the material to allow placement around the tooth during the endodontic procedure. One of the primary objectives of endodontic treatment is disinfection of the root canal system. Only dental dam isolation minimizes the risk of contamination of the root canal system by indigenous oral bacteria. The dental dam also offers other benefits, such as aiding in visualization by providing a clean operating field.

Use of dental dam isolation should also be utilized in the restoration of endodontically treated teeth any time the access cavity is exposed. Restoration of endodontically treated teeth with isolation following completion of nonsurgical endodontic therapy has been demonstrated to result in significantly higher clinical outcomes.

The clinician is in a unique position to understand the significant risks to the patient associated with endodontic therapy such as ingestion or aspiration of dental materials, irrigants and instruments resulting in significant adverse health conditions. As such, it is inappropriate to solicit and/or accept the patient's permission to perform nonsurgical endodontic therapy in the absence of dental dam isolation. An oral or signed consent of the patient is not acceptable to disregard this standard of care and would be considered negligent on the part of the clinician.

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