

# PATIENT'S PAGE



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## Dental “Specialists” – A Quick Guide – what you should know...

Your general dentist may refer you to a dental specialist for additional treatment.

There are several types of dentists that specialize in various dental treatments and the terms for these specialists can be confusing. Below, are the simple definitions of the various dental specialties:

### Endodontics

Endodontists are dentists with at least two additional years of advanced specialty education in diagnosis and root canal treatment and use their special training and experience in treating difficult cases, such as teeth with narrow or blocked canals, or unusual anatomy. Endodontists may use advanced technology, such as operating microscopes, ultrasonics and digital imaging, to perform these special services.

### Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology

This specialty deals with the nature, identification, and management of diseases affecting the oral and maxillofacial regions. It is a science that investigates the causes, processes, and effects of these diseases. The practice of oral pathology includes research and diagnosis of diseases using clinical, radiographic, microscopic, biochemical, or other examinations.

### Oral and Maxillofacial Radiology

Oral and maxillofacial radiologists produce and interpret images of the jaws, teeth, bone and other structures of the head and neck region. Radiologists are involved in the diagnosis and management of diseases, disorders and conditions that affect this area of the body. The imaging modalities utilized by radiologists for diagnosis and evaluation may include traditional x-rays, digital imaging of structures both within the mouth and outside of the mouth, computed tomography (CT) scans of the head and neck, MRI (magnetic resonance imaging), as well as ultrasonography (ultrasound imaging).

### Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery

Oral and maxillofacial surgeons are dental specialists who treat conditions, defects, injuries, and esthetic aspects of the mouth, teeth, jaws, and face. Their training includes a four-year graduate degree in dentistry and the completion of a minimum four-year hospital surgical residency program. Oral and maxillofacial surgeons care for patients who experience such conditions as problem wisdom teeth, facial pain, and misaligned jaws. They treat accident victims suffering facial injuries, offer reconstructive and dental implant surgery, and care for patients with tumors and cysts of the jaws, and functional and esthetic conditions of the maxillofacial areas.

### Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopedics

By learning about tooth movement (orthodontics) and guidance of facial development (dentofacial orthopedics), orthodontists are the uniquely educated experts in dentistry to straighten teeth and align jaws. Orthodontists diagnose, prevent and treat dental and facial irregularities. Orthodontists treat a wide variety of malocclusions (misaligned teeth and/or jaws) of young children, teens and adults.

### Pediatric Dentistry

Pediatric dentistry is the specialty of dentistry that focuses on the oral health and unique needs of young people. This specialized program of additional study and hands-on experience prepares pediatric dentists to meet the unique needs of infants, children and adolescents, including persons with special health care needs.

### Periodontics

Periodontics is that specialty of dentistry which encompasses the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of the diseases of the gums and other structures surrounding the teeth, and the maintenance of the health, function and esthetics of these structures and tissues.

### Prosthodontics

Prosthodontists diagnose and treat patients who need crowns, bridges, and partial or complete dentures. The practitioners provide diagnosis and restorative work for patients who have had dental implants placed by other surgical specialists. Some prosthodontists may place and maintain dental implants themselves.

### Dental Public Health

Dental public health is the art and science of preventing and controlling dental diseases and promoting dental health through organized community efforts. It is concerned with the dental health education of the public, with applied dental research, and with the administration of group dental care programs, as well as the prevention and control of dental diseases on a community basis.

## What is the difference between a DDS (Doctor of Dental Surgery) and a DMD (Doctor of Dental Medicine)?

The DDS and DMD are the same degrees.

The difference is a matter of semantics. The majority of dental schools award the DDS degree; however, some award a DMD degree. The education and degrees are the same.