Obtaining Consent for Routine and Emergency Care

Consent

Informed consent is the procedure of informing a patient about the choices the patient has regarding his or her dental care, and addressing any concerns he or she may have. Informed consent includes a discussion of the following elements:

- The nature of the diagnosis/procedure
- The cost of the proposed treatment
- Alternative options

Dental offices have new patients sign blanket consent forms to give their consent for dental exams and treatment. These forms often also include consent for radiography. For a more extensive treatment, a separate consent form may be required. In this case, the dentist might sit with the patient and explain the proposed treatment, including its risks and benefits. All consent forms require the patient’s signature, and the signature is often witnessed by the dental assistant and signed by the dentist. Patients are also required to sign a consent form that allows the dental office to release information to insurance companies for payment. This consent form is signed once and is valid for all following visits and treatments.

Prior to meeting with a patient, make sure his or her chart includes signed and dated consent forms.

Refusal

If a patient refuses an examination, treatment, or test, document the refusal in the patient record. If a patient refuses treatment, ask the patient to sign a statement indicating that he or she is refusing treatment, and keep that statement in the patient record. Informed refusal occurs when the patient refuses treatment after he or she has been fully educated regarding the consequences of not receiving the treatment. Accepting informed refusal from a patient does not release the dentist from providing due care.