Tips for Successful Impressions

Taking an impression is one of the most important procedures in dentistry and it is critical to achieve an exceptional restoration. We need an excellent “foundation” on which to build. We have put together a list of tips to help you take a great impression, which will ensure the best restoration possible:

**TIP**
Use a metal tray or a stiff plastic tray for the impression.

**REASON**
If the tray can be easily flexed with finger pressure, the impression material will likely flex during setting and yield a distorted impression.

**TIP**
Use a custom tray for patients that may need one for the impression.

**REASON**
Properly constructed custom trays help take impressions with over five times more dimensional accuracy than stock trays. Note: Custom trays should be made at least a day in advance, since most tray acrylic undergoes shrink polymerization within that period of time.

**TIP**
Use tray adhesive on all impression trays, even for those with perforations.

**REASON**
With adhesive, the polymerization shrinkage is toward the tray instead of toward the center of the mass.

**TIP**
We do not recommend using fast set for your crown and bridge impressions (use it for opposing impressions).

**REASON**
With the fast set, the wash is already polymerizing before the tray is even loaded, causing them to set at different rates.

**TIP**
Keep mix tip of the impression material submerged in the material while filling the tray.

**REASON**
Air bubbles can be formed when the syringe tip is in the open and lead to voids in the margin area.

**TIP**
Use a full arch tray when restoring any more than one posterior tooth.

**REASON**
This allows us to see the entire arch of the opposing teeth and how they fit together, allowing for a better restoration.

**TIP**
Assistant loading tray material should occur at the same time doctor is injecting around the prep.

**REASON**
If the tray is loaded too far in advance, the material will begin setting and force the wash material away from the margins.

**TIP**
Time all impressions, based on manufacturer’s suggested time, plus one minute.

**REASON**
The extra minute helps prevent tearing of the margins during removal.

**TIP**
Do not have your patient hold the impression.

**REASON**
Firm, consistent pressure needs to be maintained after placement by a trained hand.

**TIP**
Do not disinfect the impressions before sending to the lab.

**REASON**
We will disinfect here and the products we use in the lab may have an adverse reaction to the products you use in the office. Simply rinse the impression with cold water immediately and place in the biohazard bag.

**TIP**
Check the expiration date of the impression material.

**REASON**
Expired impression material will often function abnormally and will not set properly.

**TIP**
With “gaggers,” use a custom tray with open palate, a quadrant tray or a lower tray for upper impressions.

**REASON**
These techniques will make it easier to keep impression material away from the soft palate.