CDHO
COLLEGE OF DENTAL HYGIENISTS OF ONTARIO

Guideline: Orthodontic Procedures

INTRODUCTION

Orthodontic procedures are an established component of oral health care and are recognized as an authorized act under the *Dental Hygiene Act, 1991*. As orthodontic care becomes more accessible and increasingly integrated into client treatment plans, Registered Dental Hygienists (RDHs) need to understand their role, professional responsibilities and the legislative requirements governing this area of practice. This Practice Guideline:

- outlines the conditions under which RDHs may perform orthodontic procedures in Ontario,
- clarifies professional obligations related to client-specific orders and documentation, and
- supports RDHs in delivering safe, collaborative orthodontic care that aligns with the Scope of Practice.

GUIDANCE STATEMENT

RDHs may perform orthodontic procedures only if the client has been previously examined by a dentist and the orthodontic procedure is documented in the client's treatment plan.

RDHs cannot initiate orthodontic procedures unless they receive a client-specific order from a registrant of the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario (RCDSO). CDHO considers the dentist's orthodontic treatment plan as evidence of this order. Standing orders are not acceptable for orthodontic procedures. This helps ensure proper oversight of orthodontic care and supports interprofessional collaboration between RDHs and dentists.

RDHs should only perform orthodontic procedures that they are competent and confident in performing safely.

- A few examples of permitted procedures include but are not limited to:
  - placing/removing clear aligner resin attachments, brackets and wires;
  - taking orthodontic records, including impressions, photos and scans;
  - repairing broken wires; re-cementing appliances; and
  - removing excess orthodontic cement.
- A few examples of procedures **outside the Scope of Practice of Registered Dental Hygienists** include but are not limited to:
  - using finishing strips, interproximal reduction, and making independent clinical decisions that contradict the dentist's treatment plan (independently choosing a specific wire or whether to recommend the use of elastics).
- An RDH may choose to use a high-speed handpiece if they are competent using the instrument and careful not to remove any tooth structure.
- It is up to the dentist to determine the required level of supervision during orthodontic procedures. RDHs may perform an orthodontic procedure when the prescribing dentist is away, if the procedure is

included in the client's treatment plan and the prescribing dentist is aware that the RDH is performing the procedure.

- If there are unexpected findings that do not align with the client's treatment plan, the RDH must obtain a modified or updated treatment plan from the dentist before proceeding, in compliance with the RHPA.
- In accordance with the Dental Hygiene Standards of Practice and General Regulations under the DHA, RDHs must document the source of the order, the procedure performed, any advice given to the client, and pertinent information.
- Titles such as 'Orthodontic Dental Hygienist' or 'Dental Hygienist Specializing in Orthodontics' are not permitted, and use of such titles may constitute professional misconduct.

CONCLUSION

RDHs play an important role in delivering orthodontic care in Ontario. By following the requirements of a dentist's order, practising within their scope, and documenting appropriately, RDHs can contribute to safe, effective and collaborative orthodontic treatment.

REFERENCES

College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario, Dental Hygiene Standards of Practice
https://cdho.org/cdho-resources/dental-hygiene-standards-of-practice/

Dental Hygiene Act, 1991, S.O. 1991, c. 22
https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/91d22

Dental Hygiene Act, 1991, O. Reg. 218/94: GENERAL, Part III.1 Records
https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/940218

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