

# Medically Necessary Orthodontic Treatment

**Guideline Number:** DCG003.14  
**Effective Date:** January 1, 2025

[Instructions for Use](#)

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## Related Commercial Policy

- [Orthognathic \(Jaw\) Surgery](#)

## Coverage Rationale

**Orthodontic treatment is medically necessary when the following criteria have been met:**

- The member is under the age 19 (through age 18, unless the member specific benefit plan document indicates a different age); and
- Services are related to the treatment of a severe craniofacial deformity that results in a physically [Handicapping Malocclusion](#), including but not limited to the following:
  - [Cleft Lip](#) and/or [Cleft Palate](#)
  - [Crouzon Syndrome/Craniofacial Dysostosis](#)
  - [Hemifacial Hypertrophy/Congenital Hemifacial Hyperplasia](#)
  - [Parry-Romberg Syndrome/Progressive Hemifacial Atrophy](#)
  - [Pierre-Robin Syndrome](#)
  - [Treacher-Collins Syndrome/Mandibulofacial Dysostosis](#)

## Removal of Fixed Orthodontics Appliances for Reasons Other Than Completion of Treatment

**Removal of fixed orthodontics appliances for reasons other than completion of treatment is a decision to be made by the treating provider based on an individual patient basis.** Reasons include, but are not limited to:

- Patient non-compliance (AAOMS)
- Military deployment (Department of the Army)
- Prior to radiation therapy to the head or neck if the appliances will be in the radiation field (NIH, AAPD)
- Prior to highly stomatotoxic chemotherapy (NIH, AAPD)
- Complications related to IV bisphosphonates and other medical conditions (AAOMS)

## Definitions

**Cleft Lip:** A congenital facial defect of the lip due to failure of fusion of the medial and lateral nasal prominences and maxillary prominence. (American Cleft Palate-Craniofacial Association)

**Cleft Palate:** A congenital fissure in the medial line of the palate. (American Cleft Palate-Craniofacial Association)

**Crouzon Syndrome/Craniofacial Dysostosis:** One of a large group of facial birth defects in which there is abnormal craniofacial fusion. This fusion does not allow the bones to grow normally, affecting the shape of the head, appearance of the face and the relationship of the teeth. (American Cleft Palate-Craniofacial Association)

**Handicap (as related to Handicapping Malocclusion):** A physical, mental, or emotional condition that interferes with one's normal functioning. (Farlex Partner Medical Dictionary)

**Hemifacial Hypertrophy/Congenital Hemifacial Hyperplasia:** A rare developmental anomaly characterized by asymmetric overgrowth. Hemihyperplasia can be an isolated finding, but it also may be associated with a variety of malformation syndromes. (Neville 2016)

**Malocclusion (as related to Handicapping Malocclusion):** A deviation in intramaxillary and/or intermaxillary relations of teeth from normal occlusion. Often associated with other dentofacial deformities. (AAO)

**Parry-Romberg Syndrome/Progressive Hemifacial Atrophy:** A rare disorder characterized by slowly progressive deterioration (atrophy) of the skin and soft tissues of half of the face (hemifacial atrophy), usually the left side. (National Institutes of Health)

**Pierre-Robin Syndrome:** A complex of congenital anomalies including micrognathia and abnormal smallness of the tongue, often with Cleft Palate, severe myopia, congenital glaucoma, and retinal detachment. (American Cleft Palate-Craniofacial Association)

**Treacher-Collins Syndrome/Mandibulofacial Dysostosis:** The name given to a birth defect which may affect the size and shape of the ears, eyelids, cheek bones, and upper and lower jaws. The extent of facial deformity varies from one affected individual to another. (American Cleft Palate-Craniofacial Association)

## Applicable Codes

The following list(s) of procedure and/or diagnosis codes is provided for reference purposes only and may not be all inclusive. Listing of a code in this guideline does not imply that the service described by the code is a covered or non-covered health service. Benefit coverage for health services is determined by the member specific benefit plan document and applicable laws that may require coverage for a specific service. The inclusion of a code does not imply any right to reimbursement or guarantee claim payment. Other Policies and Guidelines may apply.

CDT Code	Description
D8010	Limited orthodontic treatment of the primary dentition
D8020	Limited orthodontic treatment of the transitional dentition
D8030	Limited orthodontic treatment of the adolescent dentition
D8040	Limited orthodontic treatment of the adult dentition
D8070	Comprehensive orthodontic treatment of the transitional dentition
D8080	Comprehensive orthodontic treatment of the adolescent dentition
D8090	Comprehensive orthodontic treatment of the adult dentition
D8091	Comprehensive orthodontic treatment with orthognathic surgery
D8220	Fixed appliance therapy
D8660	Pre-orthodontic treatment examination to monitor growth and development
D8670	Periodic orthodontic treatment visit
D8671	Periodic orthodontic treatment visit associated with orthognathic surgery
D8680	Orthodontic retention [removal of appliances, construction and placement of retainer(s)]
D8695	Removal of fixed orthodontic appliances for reasons other than completion of treatment
D8696	Repair of orthodontic appliance – maxillary
D8697	Repair of orthodontic appliance – mandibular
D8698	Re-cement or re-bond fixed retainer – maxillary
D8699	Re-cement or re-bond fixed retainer – mandibular
D8701	Repair of fixed retainer, includes reattachment – maxillary
D8702	Repair of fixed retainer, includes reattachment – mandibular
D8703	Replacement of lost or broken retainer – maxillary
D8704	Replacement of lost or broken retainer – mandibular
D8999	Unspecified orthodontic procedure, by report

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## Description of Services

Medically necessary orthodontic treatment involves the correction of the dental component of a craniofacial abnormality that results in a Handicapping Malocclusion and is intended to restore a functional dentition. It is not for orthodontic services for crowded dentitions (crooked teeth), excessive spacing between teeth, temporomandibular joint (TMJ) conditions, and/or horizontal/vertical discrepancies (overjet/overbite).

Pursuant to CA AB2585: While not common in dentistry, nonpharmacological pain management strategies should be encouraged if appropriate.

## References

American Dental Association (ADA); CDT 2025 Dental Procedure Code Book.

American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry Guideline on Dental Management of Pediatric Patients Receiving Chemotherapy, Hematopoietic Cell Transplantation, and/or Radiation Therapy. Revised 2022.

American Association of Orthodontists Clinical Practice Guidelines for Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopedics 2014.

American Association of Orthodontists Glossary 2024.

American Cleft Palate Craniofacial Association.

Department of the Army. U.S. Army Dental Command Policy 07-08, Orthodontic Care Policy. 2007.

Information on Essential Health Benefits (EHB) Benchmark Plans (links to States plans). Available at: <https://www.cms.gov/ccio/resources/data-resources/ehb.html>. Accessed August 21, 2024.

National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. Parry-Romberg Information Page. 2017.

Neville B, Damm D, Allen C et al. Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology, 4th ed. St. Louis, MO: Elsevier c2016. Chapter 1, Developmental Defects of the Oral and Maxillofacial Region; p. 1-48.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research. Oral Complications of Cancer Treatment: What the Dental Team Can Do. 2009.

## Guideline History/Revision Information

Date	Summary of Changes
01/01/2025	<p><b>Coverage Rationale</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Revised medical necessity criteria:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Updated list of services related to the treatment of a severe craniofacial deformity that results in a physically Handicapping Malocclusion; removed “other clinical criteria based on the member specific benefit plan document and any federal or state mandates”</li></ul></li></ul> <p><b>Definitions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Removed definition of:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Comprehensive Orthodontic Treatment</li><li>Craniofacial Anomaly</li><li>Medically Necessary</li></ul></li></ul> <p><b>Applicable Codes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Updated list of applicable CDT codes to reflect annual edits; added D8091 and D8671</li></ul> <p><b>Supporting Information</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Updated <i>References</i> section to reflect the most current information</li><li>Archived previous policy version DCG003.13</li></ul>

## Instructions for Use

This Dental Coverage Guideline provides assistance in interpreting UnitedHealthcare standard and Medicare Advantage dental plans. When deciding coverage, the member specific benefit plan document must be referenced as the terms of the member specific benefit plan may differ from the standard dental plan. In the event of a conflict, the member specific benefit plan document governs. Before using this guideline, please check the member specific benefit plan document and

any applicable federal or state mandates. UnitedHealthcare reserves the right to modify its Policies and Guidelines as necessary. This Dental Coverage Guideline is provided for informational purposes. It does not constitute medical advice.