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# Laser Focus

For more than 20 years, dentists have been using lasers for a wide variety of dental procedures. Read on to learn how lasers are used in the dental office and how you may benefit from a laser procedure.

## What is a laser?

A laser is an instrument that produces a very narrow, intense beam of light energy, which, in dentistry, can be used to remove or shape oral tissue, including gums, teeth, and bone.

## How are lasers used in dentistry?

Often used in conjunction with other dental instruments, lasers have a variety of functions in the dental office, including:

- Reducing the discomfort caused by canker or cold sores
- Removing decay from a cavity and preparing the tooth for a new filling
- Exposing partially erupted wisdom teeth
- Removing muscle attachments that limit proper movement
- Managing gum tissue during impressions
- Removing tissue overgrowth caused by certain medications
- Performing biopsy procedures
- Removing inflamed gum tissue and aiding in the treatment of gum disease
- Removing or reshaping excess gum and bone tissue during crown-lengthening procedures
- Treating abscessed gums and root canal infections
- Activating whitening chemicals and speeding up bleaching procedures



Your general dentist can tell you if a laser procedure is an option for your treatment.

## What should I expect from a laser procedure?

Before the procedure, your dentist will provide you, and anyone accompanying you in the operatory, with special safety glasses to protect your eyes. While undergoing treatment, you may or may not hear noises from the laser. Lasers used on soft tissue are silent, but lasers used to prepare teeth and bone make a distinctive popping sound. You also may hear and feel suction, which is used during laser procedures to keep the treatment area cool and clean.

## What are the benefits of dental lasers?

The use of a laser can sometimes replace the need for a drill or anesthesia, thus reducing pain and allowing you to have a more relaxing experience. Laser treatment also can be more precise than other methods, and lasers can be used to control swelling and minimize bleeding—reducing postoperative discomfort and healing time.

When used by a trained practitioner who follows accepted practices, dental lasers are a safe and effective treatment option. Lasers are not appropriate for every dental procedure, however, so talk to your dentist to learn if laser treatment is right for you.



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