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# RUBBER DAM

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## VIDEOS TO REVIEW (THESE ARE OLDIES BUT GOODIES 😊)

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5e979h67YVc> – Placement
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cFVk0UdsWgU> – Application
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2vI2aoPjVvk> – Basics and Equipment
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OKFmIaH236s> – Prepare and Apply

# PREPARATION

- Before beginning the rubber dam application, **it is a good idea to explain to the patient what to expect and why** it is being used. Many patients have not been exposed to the dam and may not understand or fear its use. Remind the patient that they can breathe and swallow normally or ask for a saliva ejector, which can be placed if necessary. Also prior to placement the dentist or assistant should floss the contacts of the teeth being isolated to determine if there are any tight spots.
- Rubber dams come in two sizes, 5 inches by 5 inches or 6 by 6 sheets in latex or non-latex
- Then, holes are punched for the teeth. Templates are available but "freestyle" punching is preferred because no two mouths are the same. Many times teeth are not in perfect alignment and the holes need to be offset.

## CONTINUED

- If isolating a mandibular quadrant, begin punching for the central incisor on the center line 1.5 inches from the bottom of the dam—if isolating a maxillary quadrant begin 1 inch from the top. This will help ensure that the dam will be in the proper position over the mouth and cover the lips. After looking at the patient's teeth, the remaining holes can be punched usually 3 mm to 4 mm apart using the smallest punch for the anterior teeth, the middle size for bicuspids, and the large hole for molars.
- The easiest way to create the holes without ripping the dam is to punch and push the hole-puncher through the hole. Make sure that the small rubber circles from previous punching are removed from the wheel on the puncher prior to using it.
- To allow easier movement of the dam between the contacts of the teeth, a water-soluble lubricant sometimes helps. These are commercially available from a dental supply company or at a pharmacy as **brushless shaving cream**. Placing a small amount between the holes with a small cotton applicator can be very helpful when flossing.

# CLAMP

- The next step is to select the retainer (or clamp). Ideally, the tooth to be retained should be the most distal tooth in the quadrant or at least one or two teeth distal to the operating tooth. This placement will give the operator the room to prepare, place, and finish any type of restoration.
- The retainer should have four-point contact on the tooth and be very stable! If not, it will pop off (scaring you and your patient)
- Often floss is tied to the clamp in case it does pop off, this prevents aspiration

# PLACEMENT

- There are two basic ways of placing the dam. One is to place the clamp on the tooth and then drape the dam over the bow and the other way is to place the retainer and dam at the same time, which most often is easier because the mandible or maxillary tuberosity sometimes may be in the way.
- See videos for placement 😊
- Using finger pressure, make an attempt to snap the dam through the contacts and floss the most anterior contact first to stabilize the dam. Next, floss the contacts to get the dam below the contacts. A tip here is to come from the buccal or lingual with the floss rather than straight down from the occlusal in order to reduce the resisting surface area.
- The final step is to **invert the dam using an explorer tip or spoon excavator** and air from an air/water syringe.

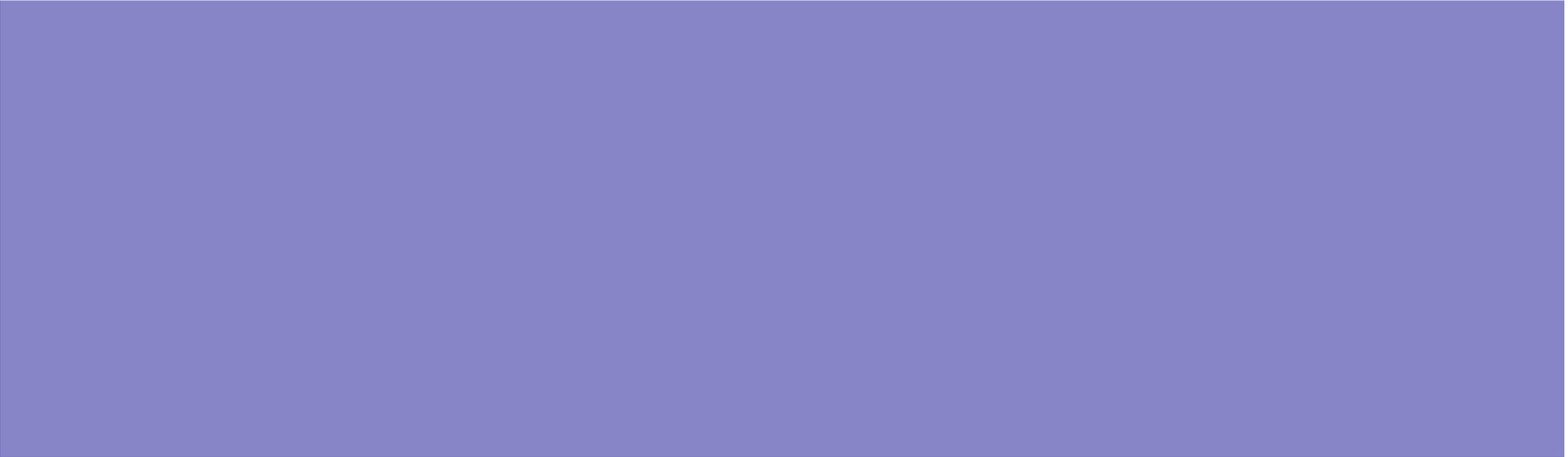
## REMOVING

- When the procedure is complete, the rubber dam can be carefully removed. First, cut the rubber dam septums with a blunt-edged scissors. Next, place the rubber-dam forceps and lift off the retainer and dam together with the napkin.
- The napkin can then be used to wipe the patient's face and clean any debris left behind.



# THINGS TO CONSIDER

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# OPTIONS

- **SIZE**

Dental Dam material is available in pre-cut squares of 6×6 and 5×5 inches. The 6×6 is used for posterior applications. The 5×5 squares are for anterior application and primary detention.

- **THICKNESS**

The thickness gauge of a dental dam can vary from thin to heavy. Thin is used for endodontic, medium is the most popular for easy placement, and heavy is used for tight contact and areas that need for stronger support.

- **COLOR**

Dental Dams come in a wide variety of colors. The most common colors are grey, blue, pink, purple, green, white, and yellow. They can also come scented or unscented, flavored or unflavored. Most dentists prefer the darker shades for contrast.

- **DAM NAPKINS**

A dam napkin can be placed between the dental dam and the patients face. This helps to absorb moisture and increase comfort for the patient.

# CONTINUED

- **DAM PUNCH**

- The dental dam hole punch is used to create holes in the dental dam needed to expose the teeth that are to be isolated. The working end of the punch is used to puncture the dam for the correct hole sizes.
  - Size 5- The largest size is an anterior tooth
  - Size 4- The next size smaller is for molars
  - Size 3- For bicuspid and canines
  - Size 2- For maxillary anteriors and incisors
  - Size 1- The smallest size, for Mandibular Anterior Incisors

- **DAM TEMPLATES**

- Sometimes it is hard to know where to cut the holes on the rubber dam. This is where a dam template is handy. The dam template and stamp inkpad allow the assistant the exactly where to place the holes if the teeth are out of the arch form.

- **DAM FORCEPS**

- Dental Forceps are used to place and remove the dental dam clamp. The beaks of the forceps fit into the holes on the jaws of the clamp. The handles have a spring action that allows the forceps when squeezed to open up and fit over the tooth. When the handles are released, the clamp is let go.

# CONTINUED

- **DAM CLAMPS**

- A dental dam clamp is used to stabilize the dental dam. The dam clamp holds the dental dam secure on the end nearest the tooth that is being treated. Clamps can be ligated for security and safety of the patient from swallowing if the clamp becomes dislodged during treatment.

- **SELECTION OF CLAMPS**

- Anterior Tooth: Double Bowed Clamp
- Pre-Molar: Small, Flat-Jawed Clamp
- Mandibular Molar: Flat Jawed Clamp
- Maxillary Molar: Curved Jaw Clamp

- **DAM FRAMES**

A dental frame is necessary to stabilize and stretch the dam tightly over the teeth. Frames come in plastic as well as metal. Both can be cold or heat sterilized.

- **LUBRICANTS**

Lubricants such as topical such as Ultradents, can be placed on the underside of the dental dam for easier placement over the teeth and through the interproximal areas.

## REMEMBER THE 'WHY'

- Helps keep saliva out of the way
- Produces a better filling because the saliva and area is kept dry
- The dental team can work faster (no tongue or saliva getting in the way)
- The patient could be more comfortable because everything is out of the mouth
- Easy to apply with practice
- **MUST** be used in Endo because bleach and other materials are being used, safety first for the patient

# RESOURCES

- <http://bvdl.com/blog/rubber-dam-placement/>
- Modern Dental Assisting Text
- Clinical Dental Hygiene Text