

PROPHYLAXIS/CORONAL POLISHING

It has come to the attention of the New Mexico Dental Hygienists Committee and the New Mexico Board of Dental Health Care, that some dental practices may be allowing dental assistants to perform coronal polishing on patients, particularly pediatric and adolescent, and billing this procedure out as a "prophylaxis". Just a reminder, coronal polishing does not constitute a dental prophylaxis and patients need to be assessed for the presence of plaque and calculus and scaled, if needed, by a licensed dentist or dental hygienist.

If a complaint is filed against a dental practice/dentist and engaging in this practice and it is proven, your license could be held accountable for malpractice and insurance fraud. The definition of prophylaxis according to the New Mexico Board of Dental Health Care's Rules and Regulations is: "the removal of plaque, calculus and stains from tooth structures as to control irritational factors", as seen in NM61-5A-4. **THIS IS NOT DONE THROUGH CORONAL POLISHING ALONE.** The rules further state that coronal polishing is "not to be represented as a prophylaxis", NM61-5A-5. Dental assistants must also be certified to expose radiographs, apply sealants, and to perform coronal polishing. If you need further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact the NM Board of Dental Health Care.