

with the biting portion 12, but may alternatively be joined with the biting portion. Similarly, in the embodiment illustrated in FIGS. 6-9, the extra-oral portion is preferably integrally formed with one of the side walls 20, but may alternatively be joined with the side wall.

While the exemplary drawings illustrate a protective shield shaped for use in the sides of the patient's mouth, it is understood that the shape and measurements of the protective shield can be adjusted to fit the patient's front teeth should it be necessary to prevent accidental biting of soft tissue areas in the front area of the mouth. It is also understood that the specific shapes, sizes and thicknesses of the various portions of the protective shield of the invention can be modified and changed as long as it does not interfere with its effectiveness, safety and comfort to the patient.

From the foregoing, it will be appreciated that the present invention provides a means by which a flexible and resilient protective shield can be placed inside the mouth of the patient in the particular area of the mouth experiencing numbness or loss of control of the teeth to present a barrier between the patient's soft tissue areas of the cheeks, tongue and lips and the patient's occlusal and side surfaces of the teeth. Moreover, the present invention is provided with a flexible portion that extends beyond the patient's mouth to enable an easy, safe and hygienic placement and withdrawal of the protective shield into and out of the patient's mouth. The protective dental shield of the invention is also relatively easy and inexpensive to manufacture, and can be offered in several colors and standard (or special) sizes that can be used in any size or shape of teeth in all individuals.

While particular forms of the invention have been illustrated and described, it will be apparent that various modifications can be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

I claim:

1. A dental shield for protecting one side of a patient's mouth, comprising:

an elongated, resilient biting portion having first and second opposite planar sides and two laterally spaced apart side edges, said biting portion shaped for placement of said first and second opposite sides between occlusal surfaces of the patient's upper and lower teeth; and

a pair of generally planar side walls made from a resilient material for forming barriers adjacent to both lateral sides of the patient's upper and lower teeth to isolate the teeth from the soft tissue areas of the patient's mouth, each side wall projecting from said laterally spaced side edges of the biting portion away from said first and second opposite sides of said biting portion.

2. The dental shield according to claim 1, further comprising an extra-oral portion extending from said biting portion outside the patient's mouth.

3. The dental shield according to claim 1, further comprising an extra-oral portion extending from one of said side walls outside the patient's mouth.

4. The dental shield according to claim 3, wherein said extra-oral portion forms a V-shaped side flap with said one of said side walls, so as to be positioned exteriorly against one side of the patient's cheek when the biting portion is placed within the patient's mouth.

5. The dental shield according to claim 4, wherein said extra-oral portion includes an aperture adjacent to its end opposite said one of said side walls.

6. The dental shield according to claim 1, wherein said biting portion and said side walls are integrally formed.

7. The dental shield according to claim 1, wherein said biting portion and said side walls are homogeneously formed.

8. The dental shield according to claim 1, wherein said side walls are trapezoidally shaped.

9. A dental shield for protecting one side of a patient's mouth, comprising:

a biting portion made of an elongated planar piece of resilient material, said biting portion having first and second opposite sides with two laterally spaced apart side edges, said biting portion shaped for placement of said first and second opposite sides between occlusal surfaces of the patient's upper and lower teeth;

a pair of side walls made from a resilient material for forming barriers on both lateral sides of the patient's upper and lower teeth to isolate the teeth from the soft tissue areas of the patient's mouth, each side wall projecting from said laterally spaced side edges of the biting portion towards said first and second opposite sides of said biting portion; and

an extra-oral portion extending from one of said side walls, wherein said extra-oral portion forms a V-shaped side flap with said one of said side walls, so as to be positioned exteriorly against one side of the patient's cheek when the biting portion is placed within the patient's mouth.

10. The dental shield according to claim 9, wherein said extra-oral portion includes an aperture adjacent to its end opposite said one of said side walls.

11. A dental shield for protecting one side of a patient's mouth, comprising:

a biting portion made of an elongated planar piece of resilient material, said biting portion having first and second opposite sides with two laterally spaced apart side edges, said biting portion shaped for placement of said first and second opposite sides between occlusal surfaces of the patient's upper and lower teeth;

a pair of side walls made from a resilient material for forming barriers on both lateral sides of the patient's upper and lower teeth to isolate the teeth from the soft tissue areas of the patient's mouth, each side wall projecting from said laterally spaced side edges of the biting portion towards said first and second opposite sides of said biting portion; and

an extra-oral portion extending from said biting portion.

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