

Interproximal Reduction (IPR) AKA Stripping AKA Polishing sides of teeth

Tooth crowding is one of many reasons why patients seek orthodontic treatment. It may come as a surprise that one of the treatments at our disposal to help address crowding can be performed in just a few minutes.

The treatment is called interproximal reduction, and orthodontists began using it in the 1940s, according to the American Association of Orthodontists. It is used in conjunction with conventional orthodontic treatment such as brackets and arch wires, as well as with removable orthodontic systems such as Invisalign. In some isolated instances, it may be done alone.

What is Interproximal Reduction?

This is the term used to describe the removal of miniscule amounts of tooth enamel, typically from the sides of the teeth that touch each other. Its purpose is to alleviate crowding or reshape the contact area between neighboring teeth. The tiny bits of space created through interproximal reduction enable us to make fast leaps in terms of tooth movement.

What are the Benefits of Interproximal Reduction?



This is an example of black triangle.

In addition to helping address crowded teeth, interproximal reduction can improve aesthetics. Sometimes teeth are naturally triangular in shape – wider at the bottom and narrower at the top. These teeth don't always lay together in an aesthetically optimum fashion. Aligning these teeth without interproximal reduction would mean that we create unsightly spaces between the teeth at

the top near where the teeth and gums meet. This is called “black triangle.”

Removing small amounts of the enamel on either side of the teeth or on at the top improves aesthetics by minimally altering the shape and making it possible for them to align properly.

Interproximal reduction also contributes to the successful outcome of orthodontic treatment, and helps ensure the long-term stability of your results after treatment is complete.



Photo courtesy of American Association of Orthodontists.

How does Interproximal Reduction Work?

We begin by evaluating your teeth shape, size, alignment and position, along with your treatment needs. Next, we identify which teeth to target for interproximal reduction. The reduction can be performed with a special dental handpiece or with a thin, flexible file inserted between the teeth.

Once we have created the additional space needed through interproximal reduction, we can continue with shifting the teeth into their ideal positions to create a healthy bite and a beautiful smile.

Interproximal reduction is something often used in combination with Invisalign treatment because it helps provide faster results in terms of tooth movement.

FAQs About Interproximal Reduction

A. Does it hurt?

No. There is no numbing required to perform interproximal reduction. We're removing a small amount of enamel, which is the "outer shell" of your teeth. This part of your tooth contains no nerves, so the procedure is painless.

B. How long does it take?

Just a few minutes. It may need to be performed just once, or sometimes we may need to perform interproximal reduction on different teeth at various times throughout treatment.

C. Can my teeth decay faster if some of the enamel is removed?

No. Teeth have a substantial amount of enamel on them, and the amount that we remove is minor. Not more than 5%. Your teeth will remain healthy and strong after interproximal reduction.

D. Will my teeth be sensitive?

In rare instances, patients experience sensitivity to hot and cold for a few days after interproximal reduction. However, this goes away. We recommend that you use high fluoride gel or paste like Sensodyne for sensitivity.

E. Will my mouth be more susceptible to periodontal disease?

No. In fact, interproximal reduction helps align teeth better and maintain proper spacing, which means it likely will be easier to perform your oral hygiene tasks to keep your teeth and gums healthy.



Inter Proximal Recontouring