Occlusal Guards
(For Ohio Only)

Policy Number: CSDEN442OH.B
Effective Date: December 1, 2026

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Related References and Policies

- UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of Ohio Medicaid Dental Quick Reference Guide
- Dental Provider Manual: UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of Ohio

Application

This Dental Policy only applies to the state of Ohio. Any requests for services that are stated as unproven or services for which there is a coverage or quantity limit will be evaluated for medical necessity using Ohio Administrative Code 5160-1-01. Early and periodic screening, diagnostic, and treatment (EPSDT) covered dental service considerations are applied to members younger than age 21 years of age pursuant to Ohio Administrative Code 5160-1-14(C)(3).

Prior Authorization

The Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM) determines coverage of dental services based on medical necessity, alignment with policy criteria, and clinical indications. CDT codes that are designated as covered by ODM are eligible for reimbursement when all applicable guidelines are met. For a comprehensive list of covered CDT codes, refer to the UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of Ohio Medicaid Dental Quick Reference Guide and/or Dental Provider Manual: UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of Ohio.

Non-covered codes may be reimbursable if special justification is submitted to include prior-authorization, clinical narrative of medical necessity, and supporting documentation including but not limited to clinical records, diagnostic imaging, periodontal charting, or any other relevant documentation to support the clinical rationale.

Description of Services

Occlusal guards are fabricated from rigid or semi rigid/soft materials to cover teeth to protect them from bruxism and clenching of teeth. They may be constructed in the dental office or by an outside laboratory. They are not for the treatment of, or therapy for diagnosed temporomandibular disorders.

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Definitions

Bruxism: Repetitive jaw muscle activity characterized by clenching or grinding of the teeth and/or by bracing or thrusting of the mandible. (Principles and Practice of Sleep Medicine, Sixth Edition)

Occlusal: Pertaining to the biting surfaces of the premolar and molar teeth or contacting surfaces of opposing teeth or opposing occlusion rims. (ADA)

Clinical Indications

Covered Codes

CDT Code	Age Limits	Frequency Limits	Authorization Required	Required Documentation
D9944	0-999	1 per 3 years per member	No	N/A
D9945	0-999	1 per 3 years per member	No	N/A
D9946	0-999	1 per 3 years per member	No	N/A

This Clinical Policy addresses occlusal guards for the protection of the dentition. Occlusal guards intended to relieve symptoms of temporomandibular joint disorders, as well as Occlusal orthotic devices, are addressed in the related Medical Policy titled Treatment of Temporomandibular Joint Disorders.

Occlusal Guards

Occlusal **guards are indicated for the following**:

- Bruxism or clenching, either as a nocturnal parasomnia or during waking hours, resulting in excessive wear or fractures of natural teeth or restorations
- To protect natural teeth when the opposing dentition has the potential to cause enamel wear such as the presence of porcelain or ceramic restorations

Occlusal guards are not indicated for the following:

- As an appliance intended for orthodontic tooth movement
- For treatment of temporomandibular disorders
- For treating headaches or other pain disorders of the craniofacial region
- As a mouthguard to protect the dentition during sports

Applicable Codes

The following list(s) of procedure and/or diagnosis codes is provided for reference purposes only and may not be all inclusive. Listing of a code in this guideline does not imply that the service described by the code is a covered or non-covered health service. Benefit coverage for health services is determined by the member specific benefit plan document and applicable laws that may require coverage for a specific service. The inclusion of a code does not imply any right to reimbursement or guarantee claim payment. Other Policies and Guidelines may apply.

CDT Code	Description
D9936	Cleaning and inspection of occlusal guard – per appliance
D9942	Repair and/or reline of occlusal guard
D9943	Occlusal guard adjustment
D9944	Occlusal guard – hard appliance, full arch
D9945	Occlusal guard – soft appliance, full arch
D9946	Occlusal guard – hard appliance, partial arch

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References

American Dental Association (ADA) CDT Codebook 2026.

American Dental Association. Glossary of Dental Clinical and Administrative Terms.

Svensson., Arima T., Lavigne G., et al. Principles and Practice of Sleep Medicine. Seventh edition. Elsevier c2022. Chapter 169, Sleep Bruxism: Definition, Prevalence, Classification, Etiology, and Consequences; 1631-1635.e4.

Policy History/Revision Information

Date	Summary of Changes

12/01/2026	**Template Updates**
	• Renamed *Related Dental Policy* to *Related References and Policies*
	• Reordered contents of policy
	  ○ Moved *Description of Services* and *Definitions* towards beginning of policy
	• Added *Prior Authorization* section
	• Renamed *Coverage Rationale* to *Clinical Indications*
	  ○ Added *Covered Codes*
	Applicable Codes
	• Updated list of applicable CDT codes to reflect annual edits; added D9936
	Supporting Information
	• Updated *Description of Services*, *Clinical Evidence,* and *References* section to reflect the most current information
	• Archived previous policy version CSDEN442OH.A

Instructions for Use

This Dental Policy provides assistance in interpreting the UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of Ohio dental benefit plans. When deciding coverage, the member specific benefit plan document must be referenced as the terms of the member specific benefit plans may differ. In the event of a conflict, the member specific benefit plan document governs. Before using this policy, please check the member specific benefit plan document and any applicable federal or state mandates. UnitedHealthcare reserves the right to modify its Policies and Guidelines as necessary. This Dental Policy is provided for informational purposes. It does not constitute medical advice.

Archived Guideline Versions

Effective Date	Guideline Number	Guideline Title
11/01/2025 – 11/30/2026	CSDEN442OH.A	Occlusal Guards
12/01/2023 – 10/31/2025	CSDEN324OH.A	Occlusal Guards

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