

DENTAL & ORAL CONDITIONS EXAMINATION JOB AID



Purpose

This job aid provides guidance and reminders to help claims processors accurately determine when dental examination requests are, and are not, warranted.



Audience

This job aid is intended for use by all claims processors responsible for requesting disability examinations, rating specialists responsible for directing development activities, and quality review specialists.



References

- [M21-1, Part IV, Subpart i](#) — Examination Requests in Support of Claims
 - [M21-1, Part V, Subpart ii, Chapter 3, Section A](#) — Determining the Issues
 - [M21-1, Part V, Subpart iii, Chapter 14](#) — Dental and Oral Conditions
 - [M21-1, Part XIII, Subpart i, Chapter 4, Section B](#) — Processing Dental Claims
 - [M21-1, Part XIII, Subpart i, Chapter 4, Section C](#) — Ratings for Dental Treatment Purposes
 - [38 C.F.R. § 3.159](#) — Department of Veterans Affairs Assistance in Developing Claims
 - [38 C.F.R. § 3.381](#) — Service Connection of Dental Conditions for Treatment Purposes
 - [38 C.F.R. § 4.150](#) — Schedule of Ratings, Dental and Oral Conditions
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Guidance

Interpreting Claims Raising Dental Issues

Service connection for dental/oral disabilities and conditions can be established for:

- compensation purposes, or
- treatment purposes only.

In accordance with [M21-1, Part V, Subpart iii, 14.1.a](#), claims processors can generally assume that a claim for a dental/oral disability or condition, filed on a prescribed form, seeks service connection for *compensation* purposes unless the claim's wording clearly communicates pursuit of dental treatment. In such cases, follow procedures found in [M21-1, Part XIII, Subpart i, 4.B.1.a](#) and [M21-1, Part XIII, Subpart i, 4.C.1.p](#). Please note, this job aid does not provide guidance on claims for dental treatment.

Dental/Oral Conditions for Which a Disability Examination is Not Warranted

In accordance with [38 C.F.R § 3.381](#) and [M21-1, Part V, Subpart iii, 14.1.c](#), the following are **prohibited** from being deemed service connected for compensation purposes. Therefore, a request for a disability examination **is not warranted** for these conditions:

- treatable carious teeth (cavities)
- replaceable missing teeth (**see Note 1**)
- dental or alveolar abscesses
- periodontal disease
- dental calculi
- third molars (wisdom teeth)
- impacted or malposed teeth (and other similar developmental defects), and
- teeth extracted because of chronic periodontal disease.

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Important: Requesting an examination for one of these conditions results in unnecessary delays in processing the claim, potential clarification requests and/or exam cancellations, and additional hardships for the Veteran (time off from work, travel, etc.) to attend an unwarranted examination.

Note 1: [38 C.F.R. § 4.150, Diagnostic Code 9913](#), does permit and provide for potential compensation-purpose service connection for missing teeth; however, it also requires that such tooth loss be associated with underlying bone (maxilla/mandible) loss acquired as a result of either:

- service trauma, as discussed below, or
- non-periodontal disease, such as osteomyelitis.

If the evidence of record shows that the claim for missing teeth meets the requirement outlined in **Note 1** above, then a request for a disability examination **may be warranted** (if all other requirements for examination are met). See [38 C.F.R. § 3.159 \(c\)\(4\)](#) and [M21-1 Part IV, Subpart i, 1.A.1.](#)

Service Trauma Defined

As identified in [M21-1, Part XIII, Subpart i, 4.C.1.e.](#), service trauma for a dental condition means an injury or wound produced by an external physical force. Examples are striking the mouth on a vehicle, striking the mouth when falling, or biting down on a cherry pit. Proper in-service tooth extraction does not constitute service trauma.

Dental/Oral Conditions for Which a Disability Examination May Be Warranted

Unless otherwise prohibited, any dental/oral condition that may be rated under (or by appropriate analogy to) the diagnostic code criteria of [38 C.F.R. § 4.150](#) is potentially subject to service connection for compensation purposes. Therefore, if all other requirements for an examination are met, a request for a disability examination **may be warranted** for such claimed conditions.

Examples of such dental/oral conditions include:

- Maxilla or mandible condition (complete or partial loss of; nonunion or malunion of; or chronic osteomyelitis, osteonecrosis, or osteoradionecrosis of)
- Loss of the condyloid or coronoid process
- Loss of the hard palate
- Loss of teeth only when due to service trauma or non-periodontal disease
- Benign or malignant neoplasm of the hard and soft tissue
- Temporomandibular disorder (TMD), including temporomandibular joint (TMJ) conditions (use the **TMD Disability Benefits Questionnaire** (DBQ) for the evaluation of these conditions, **not** the Oral and Dental Conditions DBQ)

Note 2: TMD is evaluated as a musculoskeletal condition using the TMD DBQ. The musculoskeletal TMD DBQ is **not** required to be completed by a dental specialist in accordance with [M21-1 Part IV, Subpart i, 3.B.1.m](#) and [M21-1 Part IV, Subpart i, 2.A.1.g.](#)

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Bruxism — Special Considerations Before Requesting a Disability Examination

In accordance with [M21-1, Part V, Subpart iii, 14.2.c.](#), bruxism is defined as excessive grinding of the teeth and/or excessive clenching of the jaw. Bruxism is not to be evaluated as a stand-alone service-connected disability. However, it may be considered on a secondary basis as a symptom of a service-connected disability.

A request for a disability examination **may be warranted** for the claimed condition of bruxism based on the fact patterns of the claim (e.g., increased severity of a currently service-connected condition, specific claim for secondary service connection, medical evidence of record showing a current pattern of symptoms or treatment for a same or similar condition, etc.). See [M21-1, Part V, Subpart ii.3.A.1.c](#) for issues within the scope of an expressly claimed condition and [M21-1, Part IV, Subpart i.1.B.1.e](#) about the three elements required prior to requesting an examination and medical opinion based on secondary service connection. The musculoskeletal TMD DBQ, or in some cases the Oral and Dental Conditions DBQ, may be requested. (**See Note 3.**) A diagnosis of bruxism may be rendered on either DBQ.

Note 3: If bruxism is the only dental/oral condition claimed, the TMD DBQ should be requested rather than the Oral and Dental Conditions DBQ. As the TMD DBQ is not required to be completed by a dental specialist, use of the TMD DBQ should eliminate unnecessary delays in completing the examination.