



DEBORAH A. ASHCRAFT, D.M.D.
PEDIATRIC AND ADOLESCENT DENTISTRY

ECTOPIC ERUPTION

Before permanent teeth erupt into the oral cavity and are visible, they move through the bone along their “path of eruption”. When the eruption path is incorrect, the tooth will erupt in the mouth in an incorrect position or may not erupt at all. When this occurs, this undesirable eruption is called “ectopic eruption”.

Ectopic eruption often occurs when there is inadequate space in the jaws for the teeth. The last tooth to erupt gets what space is left, which is not enough. The eruption path is deflected due to the crowding and the tooth erupts “ectopically” (in the incorrect position) or not at all.

A tooth erupting ectopically may erupt against the root of an adjacent tooth with enough pressure to cause root resorption and the ultimate loss of the adjacent tooth. An ectopic tooth may not erupt through the gum at all and may require orthodontics, as well as surgery, to bring it into a functional position. If an ectopic tooth does erupt, it will of course, erupt in an incorrect position because by definition, it has had an incorrect path or direction of eruption. If the ectopic tooth erupts, it will erupt toward the palate or out against the cheek.

Once a tooth (or teeth) is noticed to be “ectopically” erupting, interceptive orthodontics should be planned. If the tooth has inadequate space, adequate space should be made as soon as possible, preferably without removing permanent teeth. After adequate space is achieved, the ectopic tooth’s eruption should be closely observed.

Interceptive treatment benefits the ectopic teeth by the following:

1. Fewer extractions of permanent teeth are necessary.
2. Less orthodontic treatment needed once the tooth erupts.
3. Fewer side effects:
 - A. Resorption of the roots of adjacent permanent teeth.
 - B. Periodontal problems if the ectopic tooth is allowed to erupt in toward the palate or out toward the cheek.
4. Better self esteem than if the ectopic tooth erupts out of alignment and creates negative peer pressure.

Interceptive treatment will usually greatly improve the eruption of the ectopic tooth but final orthodontic alignment is normally required to obtain an ideal result.