

Interproximal Reduction (IPR)

As part of your orthodontic treatment, it is necessary to remove some enamel from the sides of some of your teeth. This procedure goes by various names. It is often referred to as interproximal reduction, reproximation, stripping, IPR and enamelplasty.

What is Interproximal Reduction (IPR)?

Essentially, what the procedure involves is removing small amounts of enamel from the sides of one or more teeth in an effort to make a tooth's dimension smaller. This is most often done to create additional space to resolve mild to moderate crowding as well as to recreate normal anatomy for a tooth that was slightly malformed. The alternative methods to create this space would be either to extract permanent teeth or to flare out the teeth and expand the dental arch form, each one of which has potential negative consequences.



How is IPR performed?

There are two basic approaches to removing enamel from the sides of teeth. The first is to take "sandpaper" like strips and rub them back and forth along the sides of the teeth removing a small amount of the outer layer of enamel. The other most common way is to use rotary instruments with either very thin discs or very small burrs to file down the sides of teeth.

What are the risks of this procedure?

For the most part, the risks are very small. Occasionally however, the following occurrences sometimes happen:

- Small step like projections can occur along the side of a tooth
- Cavities may occur in areas where the tooth has been filed down
- The affected tooth may become sensitive to hot or cold stimulation
- The gum tissue around the tooth may become cut, inflamed or swollen
- The shape of the affected teeth may be different from the adjacent teeth
- The patient's gums, lips or tongue may be nicked during the procedure

While the above occurrences do sometimes occur, when they do most of the time they are of such a minor nature that there are no long lasting negative effects. In very rare cases, IPR may lead to the nerve of a tooth being permanently damaged.

Do I have to have this procedure performed?

No you do not. Nonetheless, as previously mentioned, the only other alternative would be extraction of permanent teeth, or placing the teeth in positions that may be very unstable.