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American Dental Association

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**ADA Adopts Further Policy Discouraging Direct-to-Consumer Dental Services
Nation's Dentists Concerned about Potential Damage, Irreversible Complications to Patients**

CHICAGO, Oct. 24, 2018 — A new policy from the American Dental Association (ADA) “strongly discourages the practice of direct to the consumer (DTC) dental laboratory services because of the potential for irreversible harm to patients.” The new policy expands upon a 2017 ADA policy entitled “Do-It-Yourself Teeth Straightening” to include the sale of partial dentures, teeth whitening trays, snoring appliances, veneers and mouth guards, in addition to DTC orthodontic services.

The traditional role of a dental laboratory is to manufacture prosthetics and devices at the direction of the dentist. The dentist writes a prescription to the laboratory customized to the specific clinical needs of the patient citing the materials to be used and any special design features requested.

Recently, however, some laboratories have offered to sell such products directly to consumers. Bypassing the involvement and oversight of the dentist eliminates the dentist's essential role in diagnosing oral health conditions, creating treatment plans to meet those needs, and safely managing treatment needs through the course of dental care. Self-delivered, unsupervised dental treatment, in the view of the ADA, creates the risk of damage and irreversible harm to patients.

By circumventing the involvement of a licensed dentist, patients lose a very important quality control checkpoint—their dentist—to ensure all aspects of their treatment are performed

and are progressing in the best interests of the patient. This includes oversight of the manufacture of prosthetic devices, including disclosure of materials used and country of origin, ensuring that they are to the satisfaction of both patient and dentist. Moreover, if consumers experience problems with a DTC manufactured dental prosthetic, their ability to resolve the situation is greatly impaired in the absence of a dentist who has prescribed the prosthetic device.

However, another avenue is available. Because dental prosthetics, such as aligners, partial dentures and snoring appliances are considered medical devices by the FDA, the FDA encourages consumers as well as health care professionals, in case of problems, to utilize and submit the [MedWatch voluntary reporting form](#) to help improve safety by bringing attention to particular issues. More general information about the FDA medical device reporting program can be found [here](#).

In the view of the ADA, the dentist is ultimately responsible for the patient's care, and is the only individual licensed and qualified to accept responsibility for prosthetic care. By adopting this new policy, the ADA strongly discourages the practice of direct to consumer dental laboratory services. Visit MouthHealthy.org/DIYdentistry to learn more.

Editor's Note: Reporters are invited to follow the ADA on Twitter @AmerDentalAssn

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About the American Dental Association

The not-for-profit ADA is the nation's largest dental association, representing more than 161,000 dentist members. The premier source of oral health information, the ADA has advocated for the public's health and promoted the art and science of dentistry since 1859. The ADA's state-of-the-art research facilities develop and test dental products and materials that have advanced the practice of dentistry and made the patient experience more positive. The ADA Seal of Acceptance long has been a valuable and respected guide to consumer dental care products. The monthly *The Journal of the American Dental Association (JADA)* is the ADA's flagship publication and the best-read scientific journal in dentistry. For more information about the ADA, visit ADA.org. For more information on oral health, including prevention, care and treatment of dental disease, visit the ADA's consumer website MouthHealthy.org.