

# TECHNIQUE CLINIC

## Dedicated Sink for Impression Procedures

**T**aking impressions is not a difficult clinical procedure, but it often arouses anxiety in patients because of the gag reflex. Most dentists are taught to take impressions in the dental chair, with the patient in a reclined or semi-supine position. This position itself increases the likelihood of gagging, because intraoral space is reduced as the tongue drops back, and the alginate naturally flows toward the back of the throat.

Several techniques have been proposed to divert the patient's attention from the impression,<sup>1</sup> including conversation<sup>2</sup> and having the patient raise the head or foot.<sup>3,4</sup> In my experience, however, dedicating a sink in the operatory to impressions does more to alleviate problems by "moving Mohammed to the mountain".

### Procedure

For the lower impression, the patient sits in a low chair at about a 45° angle to the sink (A). With the patient's head vertical, the operator inserts the impression tray from the front. This allows better access than when standing next to a dental chair.

The upper impression is what usually stimulates the gag reflex. The patient should sit directly in front of the sink, keeping the neck vertical (B). The op-



erator, standing behind and to the side of the patient, holds the patient's head over the sink with one hand while inserting the tray with the other. The wall mirror lets the patient see what is happening, so he or she can help push the upper lip over the labial flange of the tray. Once the alginate is in place, the patient can tilt the head forward, keeping the mouth open over the sink.

### Advantages

- The patient is less apprehensive sitting in front of the sink than in a dental chair. When patients are more relaxed, so is the staff.
- Chairs that were formerly used for impressions are freed for

other procedures.

- Different sizes of impression trays can be kept at the sink to speed up trial fittings.
- The bite registration wax can be warmed with hot water from the tap.
- The patient can easily rinse to clear the mouth of saliva before the impression is taken.
- If the patient does gag, he or she is already at the sink. It's not necessary to keep a bowl at the ready.
- The impression can be rinsed off in the sink and placed on a disposable plastic tray to minimize handling and cross-contamination.
- After the impression is taken, the patient can rinse and clean off at the sink.

### REFERENCES

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