TOOTH NUMBERING SYSTEMS

The American Dental Association recognizes two major systems used for tooth numbering. The Universal/National System is used primarily in the United States and the International Standards Organization (ANSI/ADA/ISO Specification No. 3950 – 1984 Dentistry Designation System for Tooth and Areas of the Oral Cavity) System is used in most other countries.

The Universal /National System for the permanent dentition (1-32): (1) is the patient’s upper right molar and follows around the upper arch to the patient’s upper left third molar, (16), descending to the patient’s lower left third molar(17) and follows around the lower arch to the patient’s lower right third molar (32).

The Universal /National System order for the primary dentition is the same as described for the permanent dentition, however, the primary teeth are designated by upper case letters A through T., with A being the patient’s upper right second primary molar and T being the patient’s lower right second primary molar.


The areas of the oral cavity shall be designated by a two digit code, where at least one of the two digits is zero as follows:

00 designates the whole of the oral cavity
01 designates the maxillary area
02 designates the mandibular area
10 designates the upper right quadrant
20 designates the upper left quadrant
30 designates the lower left quadrant
40 designates the lower right quadrant
03 designates the upper right sextant
04 designates the upper anterior sextant
05 designates the upper left sextant
06 designates the lower left sextant
07 designates the lower anterior sextant
08 designates the lower right sextant

Designation of teeth:

Teeth shall be designated by a two-digit code. The first digit of the code indicates the quadrant and the second indicates the tooth in this quadrant.

a) First digit (quadrant)

Digits 1 to 4 are used for quadrants in the permanent dentition and digits 5 to 8 for those of deciduous dentition clockwise from the upper right side.

b) Second digit (tooth)

Teeth in the same quadrant are designated by the second digit 1 to 8 (1 to 5 in the deciduous dentition). This designation is from the median line in a distal direction.