

Documenting Occlusal Guards with Hard and Soft Components

This guide's purpose is to address reporting of an occlusal guard that has attributes of both a hard and a soft appliance.

CDT 2019 replaced the single by report occlusal guard procedure code with three codes intended to provide specificity and eliminate the need to prepare and submit a supporting claim narrative.

D9944 occlusal guard – hard appliance, full arch

D9945 occlusal guard – soft appliance, full arch

D9946 occlusal guard – hard appliance, partial arch

The ADA has confirmed with the action request submitter that the original intent of the hard appliance codes was that an appliance with both hard and soft components would be properly reported as a hard appliance.

Although the full entries for the above codes do not provide such definitive guidance the basis for reporting is that the operative part of a guard is the occlusal surface, and the key determinant of reporting a hard vs. soft appliance is the material that contacts the occlusal surface.

- A hard guard has an articulated occlusal surface that has a different therapeutic effect than a soft guard.
- A combination hard and soft only makes the operative (hard) part of the guard, the occlusal surface, more comfortable, but doesn't change the substantive effect, fabrication and use of the guard.

Therefore full or partial arch guards that have any hard occlusal component, regardless of whether or not they have a soft component, should be coded as hard guards – either D9944 for a full arch appliance or D9946 for a partial arch appliance.