

TECHNICAL TIP: THE IMPORTANCE OF STUMP SHADE TAKING

BY DENNIS VASQUEZ

Just last week, we called an office to find out the stump shade on a case when none was received and the doctor said, "Oh. I don't take stump shades, just use your regular shade." Hearing this made me realize some of our doctors may not know how important stump shade communication is to the success of the final case. There is no "regular shade" since dentin enamel varies so much from patient to patient and sometimes from tooth to tooth. Taking a stump shade during your preparation is as important as providing us with an accurate impression. Here's why.

When an all-ceramic case (e.Max) arrives in the laboratory, the models are prepared by painting the dies to match the color of the prepared tooth structure. This procedure is done so that a.) the technician can determine the ingot shade choice for the entire case or if different ingots will be needed for different teeth, b.) the staining process will be adjusted according to the dentin color and c.) at the quality control inspections along the way, the technician can wet the dies, place the restorations, and know how they will look in the mouth.

In this example you can see the different colors painted on the dies. Colors painted are the stump shades marked on the prescription and those indicated on emailed photographs, like the one shown here. Photographs are very helpful when the stumps are especially dark or when multiple prepared teeth have different stump shades.

Tips for taking stump shades:

- Take the shade as soon as you have finished prepping, so the dentin is not dehydrated.
- Use VITA/BlueLine shade guide that matches the color of the prepared teeth. You may even use the cervical shade of any guide.
- Hold the shade tab in the same plane as the tooth and photograph it (cell phone or office camera), being sure the printed shade number is showing on the guide.



- If the shade is between two guides it can be helpful to have both guides in the photograph.
- Stump shades are needed for all-ceramic (e.max only), not Zirconia.
- To help the technician even more, when stump shades vary within a smile makeover due to a root canal or post build-up, use a flowable composite to block out the darkness and match the adjacent stump. Be careful not to use a "white" composite, as it will be just as difficult to match as if it were too dark.
- When telling your patient what you are doing, refer to the procedure as "taking a base shade" not a "stump shade" for obvious reasons.

As with all restorations, the more information you provide to us at the laboratory the more accurate our restoration will be. Thank you in advance for taking the time to provide us with the tools with which to help you deliver what you promise to your patients.