Pediatric Crowns Are Growing Up

Gordon's Clinical Bottom Line: For years, stainless steel crowns have been used in pediatric dentistry, esthetically leaving much to be desired. However, parents and children alike would prefer to have tooth-colored crowns, which until recently have not always been readily available or cost-effective. While these newer crowns appear more natural, their characteristics are markedly different. Will they be satisfactory to you and your patients? Are they easier to place or better than stainless steel crowns? This report answers those questions for you, and makes suggestions concerning the best tooth-colored pediatric crown options for your practice.

- **Crowns** for pediatric patients are underutilized, most likely because of their cost. Other restoration options generally do not provide comparable strength, especially in cases of caries extending beyond ideal restorative parameters.

- **Indications for pediatric crowns** include:
  - Large / multi-surface caries or lesions
  - Interproximal caries extending beyond line angles
  - Following pulpotomy or pulpectomy
  - High-caries-risk children (e.g., questionable long-term follow-up)
  - Intermediate restoration of fractured tooth
  - Patients with bruxism
  - Cervical decalcification
  - Developmental defects (e.g., hypoplasia, hypocalcification)
  - Patients requiring general anesthesia or sedation: Cases include non-compliance and/or indicative medical history (e.g., patients whose developmental or medical problems will not improve with age)
  - Use as an abutment for a space maintainer (i.e., "crown and loop")

- **Additional anterior pediatric crown indications** include:
  - Incisal edge involvement
  - Poor moisture control (i.e., difficulty in maintaining dry field for specific case)

- **Stainless steel crowns** are not esthetically acceptable, yet continue to be widely used in dentistry.

This report discusses the advantages and disadvantages of each type of pediatric crown, outlines useful clinical guidelines, and refers readers to CR's website to compare brands currently available.

**CR Pediatric Crown Survey Summary**

- **Place pediatric crowns**: 51% of 772 dentists (n=772)
- **Crowns are what portion of pediatric restorations you place?** (n=396): ≤ 10% (according to 66% of dentists)
- **Dentists report parents are most concerned with** (n=396, multiple responses allowed): expected fee (48%), comfort of the child during treatment (41%), and color of crown (23%)
- **Crown location** (n=396): ≥ 90% posterior (according to 78% of dentists)
- **Pediatric crown types placed most** (n=396): stainless steel (91%), polymeric (5%), stainless steel veneered with tooth-colored material (3%), zirconia (1%), others (1%)
- **Place tooth-colored crowns** (n=396): 27%

- **Percentage of anterior crowns tooth-colored (n=107): ≥ 90%**
- **Percentage of posterior crowns tooth-colored (n=107): ≤ 10%**
- **Allergies to stainless steel pediatric crowns (n=396): rarely/never (94% of dentists)**
- **Pediatric crown brands placed most** (n=396, multiple responses allowed): 3M ESPE Primary Stainless Steel Crowns (66%), 3M ESPE Unitak Primary Stainless Steel Crowns (37%), 3M ESPE Strip Crown Forms (15%), NuSmile Signature (4%)
- **Longest service period perceived** (n=396): stainless steel (according to 98% of dentists)
- **Stainless steel prefabrication preferences** (n=396, multiple responses allowed): pre-contoured (63%), pre-trimmed (42%), pre-creamed (40%), no pre-alteration desired (30%)
- **Open-faced stainless steel crown placement** (n=396): rarely/never (according to 96% of dentists)
**Pediatric Crowns Are Growing Up (Continued)**

### Comparing Pediatric Crown Options (Crown types listed in order of most-used per CR survey)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Average Price/Crown</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stainless Steel</td>
<td>$6.25</td>
<td>- High strength and reliability</td>
<td>Low esthetic value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Minimal tooth reduction decreases risk of pulpotomy need</td>
<td>Allergic potential due to nickel content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Flexibility of material allows for: 1) contour and/or crimp for increased retention, and 2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>option of open-faced crown technique†</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polymer*</td>
<td>$5.00</td>
<td>- Minimal tooth reduction required for strip crowns</td>
<td>Lower strength; often questionable for posterior locations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Flexibility of select polycarbonate brands allows in-office crimping</td>
<td>Some polymerized polymers will not bond to subsequently placed resin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veneered Stainless Steel</td>
<td>$24.00</td>
<td>- High esthetic value due to veneering material</td>
<td>Risk of veneering material cracking/chipping from either crimping metal edges nearby or from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(tooth-colored surface)</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Edges without veneering material may be crimped for retention if passive fit not desired</td>
<td>wear during service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Some brands allow clinicians to customize pre-veneered contour and crimp of crown, as well</td>
<td>Added tooth-colored layer necessitates deeper tooth prep, increasing risk of pulpotomy need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>as extent of veneered surface coverage</td>
<td>Allergic potential due to nickel content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zirconia</td>
<td>$26.75</td>
<td>- Highest strength of any pediatric crown type</td>
<td>Challenging to isolate making effective bonding technique-sensitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- High esthetic value, due to monolithic ceramic formulation</td>
<td>Crimping too tight, thus retention must be otherwise achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aluminum</td>
<td>$8.80</td>
<td>- High esthetic value (similar to veneered stainless steel)</td>
<td>Deeper tooth prep required, increasing risk of pulpotomy need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(veneered with tooth-colored material)</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Minimal tooth reduction decreases risk of pulpotomy need</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Flexibility of unique tooth-colored coating allows for in-office contour and crimp for</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>increased retention</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* General description, including: polycarbonate, acrylic resin, and strip crowns
† Visible facing removed, then replaced with bentched plastic or resin-based composite
‡ Single-crown price, or equivalents (calculated from lowest quantity sold); improved large-quantity pricing also available for some brands. Value shown was calculated from large sample size of available brands.

### Clinical Tips

- **Inform patient of possible pulpotomy.** Because of the proximity of primary pulp to the exterior tooth surface, pulpotomies are more likely for crowns which require aggressive tooth preparations for:
  1. Fitting and/or retention purposes, or 2) extensive tooth decay.
- **Isolate restoration site** with rubber dam or other technique. For suggestions, see Clinicians Report December 2011.
- **Provide retention** when seating crown by cutting a retentive tooth prep; crimp when possible. Bonding is less effective on primary than on permanent teeth.
- **Choose a biocompatible crown option** for each patient. Nickel found in many metals (including stainless steel) is the most common allergen in dentistry. Those sensitive to metal should not receive stainless steel crowns. Risk for pediatric patients is considered less due to short-term use of primary crowns; however, each exposure to allergens increases likelihood of future biocompatibility issues.
- **Delegate to trained staff** tasks such as trimming, contouring, and crimping, so crown is ready to seat when clinician enters the room.
- **Posterior crowns require strength** when occlusion is present. Posterior strip crowns (i.e., “clear, thin forms filled with resin/composite) should be used with extreme caution. Some pediatric crown brands are contraindicated for heavy bruxism and/or single-point occlusion because of lower strength.
- **Fully cure composite** when seating strip crowns. For clinical tips on effective light curing, see Clinicians Report May 2012.
- **Avoid extracting primary teeth.** Retaining primary teeth keeps other teeth in relatively normal position and prevents severe tooth drift. A “crown and loop” space-maintaining setup with wire and solder is usually not clinically effective. For occlusion questions, consult with an orthodontist.
- **Refer non-compliant children** to a pediatric dentist when appropriate.

### ADA Billing Code

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Billing Code</th>
<th>Average Dental Fee (2011 ADA national survey)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D2930: Prefabricated Stainless Steel Crown – Primary Tooth (Stainless steel crown)</td>
<td>$231.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2934: Prefabricated Esthetic Coated Stainless Steel Crown – Primary Tooth (Veneered stainless steel crown)</td>
<td>no data *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2933s: Prefabricated Stainless Steel Crown with Resin Window (Open-faced stainless steel crown)</td>
<td>no data *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2932: Prefabricated Resin Crown (Infusion)</td>
<td>no data *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2950: Resin-Based Composite Crown, Anterior (Anterior strip crown)</td>
<td>$344.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D3220: Therapeutic pulpotomy excluding final restoration: removal of pulp canal to the dentinocemental junction and application of medication</td>
<td>$163.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2999: Code by Report (Zirconia OR Aluminum veneered with tooth-colored material. For these two crown types, specify for the “alternative benefit” of ADA codes D2930 and D2934, respectively. A new code D2929 (Prefabricated porcelain crown — primary tooth) should cover crowns starting 1/1/2013.)</td>
<td>no data *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D9215: Local Anesthesia (Although most procedures require only local anesthesia, some dentists choose to supplement with nitrous oxide — ADA code D9250 — for more difficult cases.)</td>
<td>$24.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Average dental fee not available for select ADA codes due to low use percentage among surveyed.

Note: Use of ADA billing code D2950 (core build-up, including any pins) does not generally result in reimbursement when applied to primary teeth, since this is a listed exclusion.

### CR Conclusions:

Pediatric crown options have become more diverse, especially within the last decade. Stainless steel continues to dominate because of low price, ease of use, and strength, despite allergenic potential. Stainless steel crowns are also offered in convenient pre-crimped/contoured/trimmed format, although nearly 1/3 of dentists surveyed prefer to custom fit instead. Other crown types, including stainless steel veneered with tooth-colored material and zirconia, are becoming increasingly popular for multiple reasons, mainly esthetics. Those who do not place tooth-colored pediatric crowns (73% of those surveyed) may want to gradually diversify their inventory to include esthetic options. CR invites you to compare multiple pediatric crown brands listed on CR’s website: www.CliniciansReport.org. Although tooth-colored pediatric crowns have improved, CR survey results indicate they still merit clinical improvement to compete with traditional stainless steel.
# Pediatric Crown Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Brand Company</th>
<th>Price/Crown*</th>
<th>Photo</th>
<th>Sizes and Shapes available</th>
<th>Highest Average Thickness (mm)</th>
<th>Reduction requirements (per manufacturer)</th>
<th>Crimping Evaluation</th>
<th>Key Features (per manufacturer)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stainless Steel</td>
<td>Hu-Friedy PEDO CROWNS</td>
<td>$7.20</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1st and 2nd Molars: Up/Low, L/R (2-7)</td>
<td>0.11 mm</td>
<td>No recommendation; reduction at discretion of clinician</td>
<td>Crimps well on all edges</td>
<td>Pre-trimmed, Pre-crimped. Slightly shorter than other brands (less required trimming), More narrow mesial-distal width than other brands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stainless Steel</td>
<td>Primary Stainless Steel Crowns 3M ESPE</td>
<td>$8.44</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1st and 2nd Molars: Up/Low, L/R (2-7)</td>
<td>0.13 mm</td>
<td>Buccal/Lingual: reduction not routine</td>
<td>Crimps well on all edges</td>
<td>Pre-trimmed, Pre-crimped. Bellied shape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stainless Steel</td>
<td>Unitak Primary Stainless Steel Crowns 3M ESPE</td>
<td>$8.44</td>
<td>Upper Incisors: L/R (1-6)</td>
<td>Upper Incisors: L/R (1-6)</td>
<td>0.57 mm</td>
<td>Occlusal/Incisal: 2.0 mm, Buccal/Lingual: 1.0 mm</td>
<td>Crimps well on all edges</td>
<td>Thick occlusal surface to prevent bite-through. More shallow occlusal anatomy for less tooth reduction, Parallel walls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polymer</td>
<td>PeloNatural Crown PeloNatural Crown</td>
<td>$9.45</td>
<td>Upper Incisors: L/R (2-4)</td>
<td>Upper Incisors: L/R (2-4)</td>
<td>0.57 mm</td>
<td>Occlusal/Incisal: 2.0 mm, Buccal/Lingual: 1.0 mm</td>
<td>Crimping (unique flexible poly carbonate)</td>
<td>Coloration universal (translucent cement shade recommended). No dry-field issues (all materials hydrophilic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stainless Steel</td>
<td>NuSmile Signature NuSmile Pediatric Crowns</td>
<td>$20.95</td>
<td>Upper Incisors: Universal (1-8)</td>
<td>Upper Incisors: Universal (1-8)</td>
<td>1.11 mm</td>
<td>Occlusal/Incisal: 2.0 mm, Buccal/Lingual: 1.0 mm</td>
<td>Crimps well on all edges</td>
<td>2 shades, 2 lengths (anterior). Custom Rx crowns provide additional customization options to specify pre-veneered contour and crimp of crowns, as well as extent of veneered surface coverage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zirconia</td>
<td>EZ-Pedo EZ-Pede</td>
<td>$25</td>
<td>Upper Incisors: L/R (1-6)</td>
<td>Upper Incisors: L/R (1-6)</td>
<td>0.46 mm</td>
<td>Occlusal/Incisal: 2.0 mm, Buccal/Lingual: 1.0 mm</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>ZircLock interior retentive grooves; Zir-Plus exterior surface provides maximum esthetics with minimum weight. EZ-Seal crown contour promotes less tooth reduction. Non-thinning margins increases risk of microfractures during seating. Multiple patents (includes Zir-Lock), Auto claveable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zirconia</td>
<td>NuSmile ZR NuSmile Pediatric Crowns</td>
<td>$24.95</td>
<td>Upper Incisors: L/R (1-4)</td>
<td>Upper Incisors: L/R (1-4)</td>
<td>0.76 mm</td>
<td>Incisal: 2.0 mm, Buccal/Lingual: 1.0 mm</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>2 shades available. Translucency set to prevent dark color show-through, Polished instead of glazed to reduce wear on opposing dentition, Auto claveable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aluminum veneered with tooth-colored material</td>
<td>Pede Pearls Jawa Crown</td>
<td>$8.93</td>
<td>Upper Incisors: Central - Universal (1-4)</td>
<td>Upper Incisors: Central - Universal (1-4)</td>
<td>0.31 mm</td>
<td>Similar tooth preparation to stainless steel</td>
<td>Crimps on all edges (Note: No visible damage to tooth-colored material)</td>
<td>Tamable and crimpable. Thinner than stainless steel veneered with tooth-colored material, Infinite shelf life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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* Single crown price, or equivalent (calculated from lowest quantity sold); improved large quantity pricing also available for some brands
† Other available version (posterior/anterior) not evaluated by CR; manufacturer reports other version to have similar manufacturing result
‡ Although not officially indicated, clinicians may attempt to use upper lateral crowns for lower central incisors and upper canines or lower cusps.
§ Must use manufacturer provided bite-occlusal pliers to bond margin in traditional crimping pliers will adversely impact margins

** Crown material formulations may differ from that of already-available products of this brand

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**Additional brands available (not evaluated by CR):**

- Stainless Steel
  - A.T. Stainless Steel Crowns by Success Essentials
  - A-1 Stainless Steel Crowns by A-1 Crown
  - DENOVO Stainless Steel Crowns by DENOVO Dental
- Polymer
  - DirectCrown by DirectCrown Products
  - Pediatric Strip Crowns by Success Essentials
  - Pede Jacket Crowns by Success Essentials
- Stainless Steel veneered with tooth-colored material
  - Cheng Crowns by Cheng Crowns
  - PolyCrowns by Success Essentials
  - Kindermakers Next Generation by Kindermakers
- Zirconia
  - Kinder Krowns Zirconia by Kinder Krowns
WHAT IS CR?

WHY CR?
CR was founded in 1976 by clinicians who believed practitioners could confirm efficacy and clinical usefulness of new products and avoid both the experimentation on patients and failures in the closet. With this purpose in mind, CR was organized as a unique volunteer purpose of testing all types of dental products and disseminating results to colleagues throughout the world.

WHO FUNDS CR?
Research funds come from subscriptions to the Gordon J. Christensen Clinicians Report®. Revenue from CR’s “Dentistry Update®” courses support payroll for non-clinical staff. All Clinical Evaluators volunteer their time and expertise. CR is a non-profit, educational research institute. It is not owned in whole or in part by any individual, family, or group of investors. This system, free of outside funding, was designed to keep CR’s research objective and candid.

HOW DOES CR FUNCTION?
Each year, CR tests in excess of 750 different product brands, performing about 20,000 field evaluations. CR tests all types of dental products, including materials, devices, and equipment, plus techniques. Worldwide, products are purchased from distributors, secured from companies, and sent to CR by clinicians, inventors, and patients. There is no charge to companies for product evaluations. Testing combines the efforts of 450 clinicians in 19 countries who volunteer their time and expertise, and 40 on-site scientists, engineers, and support staff. Products are subjected to at least two levels of CR’s unique three-tiered evaluation process that consists of:

1. Clinical field trials where new products are incorporated into routine use in a variety of dental practices and compared by clinicians to products and methods they use routinely.

2. Controlled clinical tests where new products are used and compared under rigorously controlled conditions, and patients are paid for their time as study participants.

3. Laboratory tests where physical and chemical properties of new products are compared to standard products.

Clinical Success is the Final Test

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New dental products have always presented a challenge to clinicians because, with little more than promotional information to guide them, they must judge between those that are new and better, and those that are just new. Due to the industry’s keen competition and rush to be first on the market, clinicians and their patients often become test data for new products. Every clinician has, at one time or another, become a victim of this system. All own new products that did not meet expectations, but are stored in hope of some unknown future use, or thrown away at a considerable loss. To help clinicians make educated product purchases, CR tests new dental products and reports the results to the profession.