

Replacing Missing Teeth




Why bother replacing teeth? - depending on how many teeth, the obvious answer is usually for appearance and to eat! However did you know that missing just one tooth may start a chain of events that may lead to more tooth loss and problems for you? For example, losing your first lower molar "early" can cause the tooth adjacent to the spaces to tip and sometimes even drift. The top tooth can grow down after losing its opposing member causing an imbalance in the bite. The drifting and tipping of teeth will open up spaces between its adjacent teeth allowing food to trap and this in turn may contribute to gum disease and decay. So a vicious starts where if not fixed will progress to further tooth loss. Of course this will not happen in everybody but we have seen too many cases of this happening in patients occurring in all ages and different races not to treat the loss of any teeth in the mouth seriously. At the very least, we would not be doing our jobs correctly if we did not warn our patients of this problem.

With the loss of teeth, is also the progressive loss of supporting bone. The gums follow the shape of the bone and with the loss of bone, deficiencies will occur which may create an aesthetic problem for the patient. Certainly in the patient with no teeth, progressive loss of bone will cause dentures to become loose requiring relining procedures. Without teeth holding on to the bone, it will come a time where the jaws become that atrophied that the retention and stability of the dentures becomes problematic. By this time, it may be too late to do anything.

The dentists at our practice are acutely aware of this problem and will be happy to provide solutions from replacing teeth simply with simple acrylic dentures to the very sophisticated replacement of teeth using dental implants. Once again we do not impose one treatment modality over another but will advise accordingly after a thorough examination and work together with the patient choosing the best solution that will meet the patient's expectations and budget.

Methods of replacing missing teeth:

1. Dentures - complete.
These are dentures that replace all missing teeth. For upper dentures, the suction is created by the surface tension of t thin film of saliva between the tissues and the denture the seal it can create with the mucosa. Unfortunately this cannot be achieved in the lower complete denture and in all cases; the patient learns to juggle the denture to keep the denture in place between the movement of the tongue and the cheeks/lips.
1. 2. Dentures - partial
These are removable dentures that are made entirely of acrylic or of a combination of acrylic and Chrome cobalt which provides a strong framework. Chrome cobalt dentures are more comfortable and more retentive. It covers less gum tissue and generally well accepted by many patients who choose this method of teeth replacement.
2. 3. Fixed bridgework

Preparation of adjacent teeth	Bridge creation	Final crown and bridge restoration
		

Where possible, and where there are enough supporting teeth, it may be possible to prepare the teeth adjacent to the spaces to support a "fixed" bridge that returns the comfort, appearance and stability of the original teeth. Bridgework is a sophisticated procedure requiring several appointments but the long term benefits to the patient is the comfort of not having a removable prosthesis in the mouth and the appearance of the bridge.

In some cases having something "fixed" will prevent the embarrassment of removable dentures slipping when talking or eating.

3. 4. Implant retained dentures/crowns
- Multiple unit implants with bridge preparation
 - Multiple unit implant bridge restoration
 - Dental implants can be used to provide fixation points where a denture could be attached to. The benefit of this is to have a prosthesis that does not move and hence less sore spots occurring underneath dentures. Depending on the number of implants used, a totally 'fixed" prostheses can be done where the patient does not have to remove the prostheses and can treat the dentures almost as if they were their own natural teeth again.
 - Dental implants can be used to replace a single tooth and also used to support a bridge.
 - Implants are currently the "state of the art" method of replacing missing teeth.