

BRIDGE

A BRIDGE IS A DENTAL RESTORATION THAT REPLACES MISSING TEETH. IT IS MADE OF A FALSE TOOTH ATTACHED TO CROWNS WHICH FIT OVER TEETH ON BOTH SIDES OF A SPACE. A BRIDGE IS CEMENTED IN PLACE AND CANNOT BE TAKEN OUT.

Frequently Asked Question

1. What material is in a Bridge?

Bridges are made of three types of materials:

1. Porcelain - most like a natural tooth in color
2. Gold Alloy - strongest and most conservative in its preparation
3. Porcelain fused to an inner core of gold alloy (Porcelain Fused to Metal or "PFM") - combines strength and aesthetics

2. What are the benefits of having a Bridge?

- Bridges build back your smile and help you to speak and chew properly by restoring your teeth to their natural size, shape and - if using porcelain - color. They help maintain tooth, bite and jaw alignment by preventing remaining teeth from shifting out of position.

3. What are the risks of having a Bridge?

In having an bridge, some inherent risks exist both to the tooth and to the bridge itself. The risks to the remaining teeth are:

- Preparation for a bridge weakens tooth structure of the anchor teeth and permanently alters the teeth.
- Preparing for and placing a bridge can irritate the anchor teeth and cause "post-operative" sensitivity which may last for up to 3 months.
- Anchor teeth for bridges may need root canal treatment about 63 of the time during the lifetime of the tooth.
- Anchor teeth may become mobile if there is bone loss around their roots.
- If the cement seal at the edge of the crown over an anchor tooth is lost, decay may form at the juncture of the crown and tooth.

The risks to the bridge are:

- Porcelain may chip and metal may wear over time.
- If a tooth needs a root canal after the bridge is permanently cemented the procedure may fracture the bridge and the bridge may need to be replaced.
- The longer the bridge the shorter the lifespan; three tooth bridges last 10- 15 years on average.

4. What are the alternatives to having a Bridge?

Three alternatives to bridges exist:

1. Replace the missing tooth with an implant.
2. Replace the missing tooth with a removable partial denture.
3. Leave the space as is.

5. How can an existing bite affect a Bridge?

- Excessive biting forces or untreated bite problems may lead to the anchor teeth breaking or loosening.
- Excessive biting forces or untreated bite problems may lead to the bridge chipping, breaking or loosening.

6. Are there any post treatment limitations once I have a Bridge?

- As a bridge is made in one solid piece, it is not possible to floss in between the teeth; special dental aids must be used to maintain the health of the anchor teeth and gums around the bridge.
- Porcelain on bridge may have a good color match with adjacent natural teeth when the bridge is placed but less of a match as your natural teeth age.
- Food may become lodged under fixed bridges; gum recession over time may make food impaction unavoidable, even with the most ideal bridge contour.
- Gum recession may lead to unsightly dark roots or bridge margins becoming visible.
- A bridge may chip or break if used for abnormal activities (e.g. biting fishing line, sewing thread or fingernails, opening bottles).

