

FAQ's About Bridges

What is a 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.

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*

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.

What are the risks of having a Bridge?

In having a bridge, some inherent risks exist both to the remaining teeth 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 6% 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*

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*

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*

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 finger nails, opening bottles)*