

Q Can I always have a bridge to replace missing teeth?

A Bridges are only possible if you have enough strong teeth with good bone support. Your dentist will help you decide which is the best way of replacing missing teeth.

Q What are bridges made of?

A Bridges are usually made of porcelain bonded to precious metal. Sometimes, there are other non-precious metals used in the base for strength. There are also new bridges made entirely of a special type of strong porcelain.

Q What will a bridge cost?

A Costs will vary according to the size and type of bridge you need. Always get a written estimate and treatment plan before beginning any dental treatment. Although a bridge may seem expensive it should last many years.

Q How do I look after my bridge?

A You need to clean your bridge every day, to prevent problems such as bad breath and gum disease. You also have to clean under the false tooth every day. Your dentist or hygienist will show you how to use a bridge needle or special floss, as a normal toothbrush cannot reach.

Q Are there other methods for fixing false teeth?

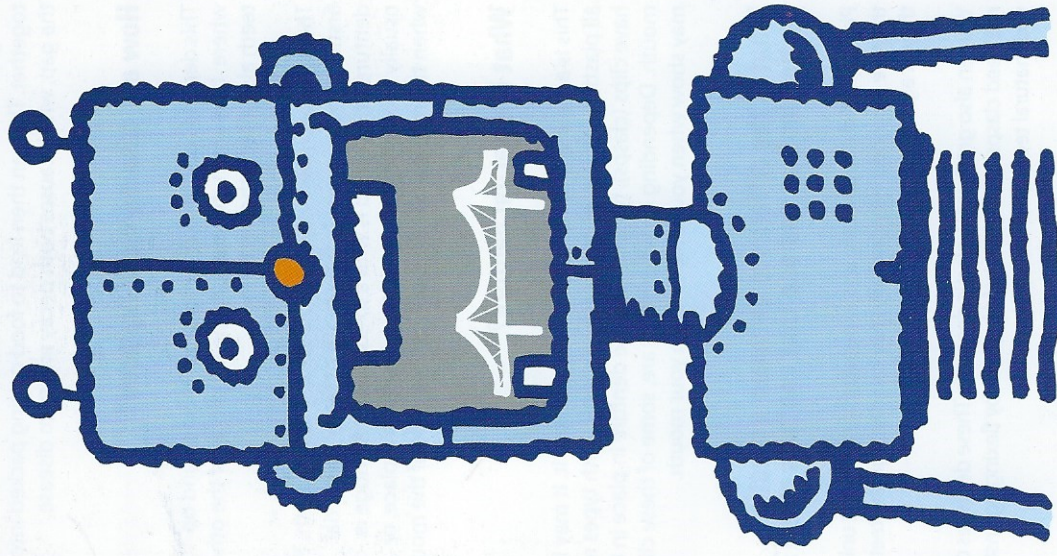
A There are other methods, such as using a combination of crowns and partial dentures that can keep the retaining clips out of sight. These are quite specialised dentures, so you should ask your dentist about them.

Q Can I have teeth which attach to the jawbone?

A Yes, by having implants. The success of this technique means you may be able to replace missing teeth without crowning other teeth. For more information see our 'Tell me about' leaflet Implants.

Remember that it is as important to care for your remaining teeth as it is to replace the missing ones.

Bridges and partial dentures



The British Dental Health Foundation is an independent, UK-based charity dedicated to promoting the benefits of good oral health to the public throughout the world.

The Foundation promotes three key messages:

- brush your teeth for two minutes twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste.
- cut down on how often you have sugary foods and drinks.
- visit your dentist regularly, as often as they recommend.

Look for our 'Approved' symbol on oral health products. You can trust these products to live up to the claims on their packaging.



The Dental Helpline is the Foundation's own confidential advice service. Qualified dental professionals are available to answer your questions personally from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. Or you can send us a question by email from our website at any time.

Dental Helpline
0845 063 1188
www.dentalhealth.org

It costs the Foundation £9 for every enquiry we answer. If you would like to make a donation, please send a cheque to the address below, or phone 01788 539793 to donate by credit or debit card.

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Why should I replace missing teeth?

Your appearance is one reason. Another is that the gap left by a missing tooth can mean greater strain is put on the teeth at either side. A gap can also mean your 'bite' is affected, because the teeth next to the space can lean into the gap and alter the way the upper and lower teeth bite together. This can then lead to food getting packed into the gap, which causes both decay and gum disease.

How are missing teeth replaced?

This depends on the number of teeth missing and on where they are in the mouth. The condition of the other teeth also affects the decision.

There are two main ways to replace the missing teeth. The first is with a removable false tooth or teeth – a partial denture. The second is with a fixed bridge. A bridge is usually used where there are fewer teeth to replace, or when the missing teeth are only on one side of the mouth.

What is a partial denture?

This is a plate with a number of false teeth on it. It may be all plastic or a mixture of metal and plastic. Both types may have clips (clasps), to help keep the denture in place in the mouth. Depending on where they are, some of these clips may show when you smile or open your mouth.

What is the difference between a plastic partial denture and one that contains metal?

Plastic partial dentures are less expensive to make. But unless they are designed very carefully they can damage the teeth they fit against.

You can also get flexible plastic dentures. These dentures do not need clasps as they are held in place by flexing against your natural teeth.

Metal partial dentures are usually from an alloy of cobalt and chromium and they are much stronger. They are lighter

to wear and can be supported by the remaining teeth. Although the base is metal, they have gum-coloured plastic and natural-looking teeth fixed to them. They are more expensive than the plastic ones

How do I choose the best type for me?

Be guided by your dentist. He or she will know the condition of your remaining teeth and will be able to advise you on your individual situation. In most cases a metal-based partial denture gives the best result.

Can I have a bridge fitted straight after having a tooth removed?

In many people it can take up to 6 months for the gums to heal properly after an extraction. This means that you may need to have a temporary denture for 6 months before the bridge is fitted.

How do I look after my denture?

The general rule is: brush, soak, brush. Always clean your dentures over a bowl of water or a folded towel in case you drop them. Brush your dentures before soaking, to help remove any food debris. The use of an effervescent denture cleaner will help remove stubborn stains and leave your denture feeling fresher – always follow the manufacturers' instructions – then brush the dentures again, as you would your own teeth, being careful not to scrub too hard as this may cause grooves in the surface.

Most dentists advise using a small to medium headed toothbrush or denture brush and toothpaste. Make sure you clean all the surfaces of the dentures, including the surface which comes into contact with your gums. This is especially important if you use any kind of denture fixative.

If you notice a build up of stains or scale, have your denture cleaned by your dentist or hygienist.

Should I take my denture out at night?

Your dentist may recommend removing your dentures at night to give your mouth a chance to rest. If you remove your dentures, it is important to leave them in water to prevent any warping or cracking.

What is the alternative to a partial denture?

The main alternative is a fixed bridge. This is made by putting crowns on the teeth at either side of the space, and then joining these two crowns together by placing a false tooth in the space.

This is all made in the laboratory and then cemented into place with special adhesives. The bridge cannot be removed for cleaning.

Another option is an adhesive or "Maryland" bridge. This has wings that are bonded to the back of the supporting teeth with very little drilling involved.

