



THE BLOCKLEY PARTNERSHIP  
*Working together for your dental health*

# Dentures

Dentures are prostheses made to replace missing teeth. They are removable. They can be made in acrylic (plastic) or in acrylic over a metal framework (cobalt chrome or gold).



## About dentures

Dentures can be used to improve function and appearance. Although they are sometimes seen as a rather dated treatment, dentures can be a very effective approach to tooth replacement due to their relative simplicity when compared with other more complex treatment options such as bridges or implants.

They usually involve no tooth preparation and it is generally very straightforward to make further additions should other teeth be lost later on, particularly if it is an acrylic denture. Dentures are often a much less expensive treatment option compared to the alternatives.

Usually their fabrication involves several short appointments (about four or five) over a period of a month. In emergency situations they can be made in a matter of days.

## Wearing dentures

### What to expect after your new dentures have been fitted

At first your dentures may feel loose, they may even tip forward when you chew, allowing foods or liquids to pass under them. This will improve as you learn to keep them in place using the muscles of your cheeks and tongue. No matter how thin your dentures are they nearly always feel bulky to start with. They are likely to make your tongue feel crowded and occasionally cause a slight gagging sensation. You will adapt to the denture fairly quickly.

## Appearance

When you first get dentures, your facial expressions may seem different. A more normal expression will return when the muscles of your cheeks and lips adapt to the dentures. Dentures may improve your appearance by changing the shape of your face and reducing wrinkles.

## Eating

When you first get dentures it is best to only eat soft foods. Cut your food into small pieces and chew slowly on both sides with your back teeth to keep your dentures from tilting. After a few days, when your dentures are feeling more comfortable, gradually try coarser and harder foods until you are able to eat a more normal diet.

## Speaking

Sometimes, wearing dentures can make a difference to the way you pronounce certain words. To help overcome any speech difficulties, practice reading aloud. If the denture teeth click together when you talk, speak more slowly. Your dentist will be able to help with any persistent problems. At first you may find that your dentures become loose when you laugh, or cough, or even smile. To reposition them, close your teeth together gently and swallow.





## When to wear your dentures

You should always take your dentures out before going to bed at night, and put them back in the morning. This gives your mouth a chance to rest and helps to maintain the health of your gums.

## Caring for your mouth

Even with your dentures, you still need to take care of your mouth. Each day before inserting your denture brush your gums, tongue and palate with a soft-bristled brush to remove plaque and stimulate circulation.

Until your gums get used to supporting dentures your mouth may feel sore or irritated and your saliva flow may temporarily increase. After a few weeks these problems should decrease. If you continue to experience irritation or excessive soreness your dentist will be able to help you.

# Caring for your dentures

## Denture cleaning

For a healthy mouth and fresh breath, clean plaque and food deposits from your denture at least twice daily. This also helps keep the dentures from becoming permanently stained.

Dentures should be handled carefully. Dropping them (even a few inches into the sink) could break the denture base or a tooth. When cleaning your dentures hold them firmly over a towel or a basin half filled with water. Before brushing your dentures, rinse them well to remove any loose particles. Next, apply your favourite denture cleaner to a moistened brush and clean all surfaces of the denture. Brush thoroughly but carefully. Scrubbing too hard can damage the plastic parts of the denture or bend metal clasps.

There are many proprietary products on the market for cleaning dentures but some people prefer to use ordinary soap, a mild dishwashing liquid or baking soda. Household cleaners should not be used because they are too abrasive. Do not put dentures in hot water, this can distort them and damage the fit. Hot water can also bleach the colour from the pink gum coloured acrylic. Never use bleach on your dentures!

The acrylic that your dentures are made from may change shape when it dries out, so when you take your dentures out at night, place them in a container of denture-cleaning solution or water. If your dentures break, crack or chip, or if a denture tooth becomes loose, call the practice. We can usually repair dentures quickly but try to save the broken pieces and bring them with you.



## Long-term denture success

Although well cared for dentures will keep their shape, your mouth continues to change. These changes occur more rapidly if you have recently lost a tooth. The bone and gum ridges that support your denture can shrink. If ridge shrinkage occurs, your dentures will begin to feel loose and less stable, and your ability to chew may decrease.

Prolonged use of ill fitting dentures can irritate the gums, tongue and cheeks and cause the ridges of the mouth to shrink so much that it becomes extremely difficult to wear them. To prevent or correct these problems you should visit your dentist regularly (even if you no longer have any natural teeth) for a complete oral examination every 2-3 years. Besides checking your dentures the dentist will look for signs of oral cancer and examine your gum ridges, tongue, palate and jaw joints

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