

Dentures

Orthodontics and Restorative Dentistry

Information for Patients

Produced: February 2019

Last reviewed: October 2022

Next review: October 2025

Leaflet number: 337 Version: 3

What are dentures?

Dentures are removable false teeth that fit over the gums and replace missing teeth. Dentures are made from plastic (acrylic) or a combination of plastic and metal (cobalt-chrome). Dentures are removable and should be taken out after every meal for cleaning, and at night to allow your mouth to rest.

Types of dentures

- Complete dentures - used when all teeth have been lost.
- Partial dentures - used when some of the teeth have been lost.
- Overdentures - sit over any remaining teeth.
- Implant retained overdentures: complete or partial dentures that are held in place by dental implants.



Upper cobalt-chrome partial denture

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How are dentures made?

Denture construction normally involves 6 to 7 appointments over several months, which includes the following:

- 2 sets of moulds (primary and secondary impressions) are taken to get an accurate model of your mouth.
- The relationship between the upper and lower jaws is then recorded using wax blocks.
- A trial stage where you and your dentist can check the appearance and function. If major corrections are needed, this stage is repeated.
- The dentures are then fitted and reviewed.
- The time between appointments may vary depending upon the type of denture that is made.

Who will do my treatment?

Most dentures can be done by your dentist and do not need to be made in hospital. There are certain times where hospital treatment may be needed, for example:

- After oral cancer when the shape of the mouth has changed and sensations have changed.
- Patients with certain medical conditions which make it difficult to control a denture such as Parkinson's disease.
- After significant trauma

What will having new dentures be like?

It is common to have the following issues when dentures are fitted:

Discomfort

Mild discomfort is common and often gets better after a few days. If this is severe or the dentures cause pain, you should take them out. Dentures should be reviewed 1 to 2 weeks after they have been fitted to check for discomfort and relieve any sore areas. If you have not been wearing your dentures because they cause discomfort, please try to put them in on the morning of your review appointment if possible. This allows us to see any sore spots and make adjustments.

Altered speech

Your speech will sound strange at first, and pronouncing certain words can be difficult. This usually resolves itself during the first few weeks as you get used to the dentures. To speed up this process you can practice reading aloud when you are alone.

Excess saliva

After your dentures are fitted you may find that you produce more spit/saliva for a few days. This is normal when something new is introduced into the mouth.

Looseness

Your dentures may feel loose until you learn to control them. This could take several weeks or months.

How do I eat with complete dentures?

Eating with complete dentures takes time and practice. We recommend that you start with soft foods and gradually move on to more solid food. You may need to cut your food up into smaller pieces and chew using both sides of your mouth.

Whilst most people manage to eat a reasonable range of foods with time, some foods are more difficult to eat than others. For example, biting very thin foods, such as lettuce, or foods with a tough skin, such as apples, can be difficult.

Should I use denture fixative?

Some patients choose to wear denture fixative as it can make their dentures feel more secure.

If you do wear denture fixative, make sure that once the dentures are in place the fixative remains within and does not spill over the edges of the dentures. This way you will not use too much.

Living with dentures

Every patient's experience with dentures will be different. It is important to understand that if someone else has had a good or bad experience this does not mean it will be the same for you.

This is because:

- The shape of the mouth and amount of bone left to support the dentures will vary.
- Some people are better at tolerating their dentures than others.
- Some people are better at controlling their dentures than others (called neuromuscular control).
- As you get older you lose bone and you need to have more realistic expectations about what can be achieved with dentures.

How do I clean my dentures?

- Your dentures should be taken out after every meal and cleaned with warm soapy water and a soft denture brush.
- Avoid cleaning your dentures with a normal toothbrush and toothpaste as this can scratch the denture. Scratches allow bacteria to build up and increase staining.
- Clean the dentures over a towel or a sink containing water. This way if the dentures are dropped they should not break.

- When you take your dentures out, brush any remaining teeth or roots with a toothpaste containing fluoride.
- Leave your dentures out for at least 6 hours every day. Most people find it best to do this overnight. This will help keep the inside of your mouth healthy.
- When your dentures are left out of the mouth they should be left in plain cold water.
- Dentures should be cleaned using denture cleaning tablets or solution at least 2 times a week for no more than 15 minutes. This will help reduce the build up of bacteria and stain. Using too much denture cleaning tablets/solution can cause discoloration and tarnishing of any metal components.

How often should I visit the dentist?

- Even if you do not have teeth, it is still important for you to visit your dentist once a year.
- At this appointment the general health of your mouth will be checked. You will also be screened for mouth cancer and adjustments to the dentures can be made.
- Dentures will need replacing every few years due to normal wear or because of a deterioration in the appearance. Your dentist can help to advise you when this might be appropriate. If dentures have been made in the Department they should normally be replaced by the dentist copying the features of the previous dentures.

Implant retained overdentures

If you are unable to wear well-designed complete dentures, implant retained overdentures may be an option. These are held in place by dental implants into the jaw bone. Implant retained overdentures usually stay in place better than conventional dentures but they are not fixed in place. Implant retained overdentures must be taken out at night and after every meal for cleaning.



Two dental Implants in the lower jaw



Blue retentive clips in a lower overdenture that fit onto dental implants in the lower jaw

Implant retained overdentures are not possible in all patients and have a number of disadvantages:

- A surgical procedure is needed to put the implants in. This is usually done with local anaesthetic.
- Once dental implants are placed they are usually left for 3 to 6 months to integrate with the bone. Treatment takes a long time.
- Dental implants are only possible if there is enough bone.
- There may be medical reasons why dental implants are not possible. For example, dental implants are usually avoided in patients who take bisphosphonate medication or have received radiotherapy to the head and neck area.
- Dental implants can fail and failure rates are higher if you smoke.
- Dental implant placement in the lower jaw is associated with a risk of damage to the nerve that supplies sensation to the lower lip.
- Implant retained overdentures need regular maintenance. The clips often need reactivation or replacement at least once a year.

Contact details

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