

The Fitting and Care of Dentures

A guide for patients

Millions of people worldwide wear dentures. With today's technology, they look more natural and fit better than ever before. For many people, dentures vastly improve their oral health and appearance.

A denture is called a prosthesis, and the fitting of a denture is called denture prosthodontics; you may hear your dentist use these terms.

As we age, our teeth gradually deteriorate. Ageing teeth become brittle and crack or chip more readily. Deep decay adds to the problem.

If present, severe gum disease (called periodontitis) may damage gums and jawbone, leading to tooth loss. If teeth are badly affected by wear, trauma, decay or gum disease, your dentist may suggest extraction as the best treatment option.

Even at a relatively young age, some people have extensive loss of teeth. When many teeth are lost or extracted, a denture may have to be fitted to maintain normal chewing, bite (occlusion), speech and the appearance of the upper and lower jaws.

Materials: Dentures can be made of acrylic, metal or a combination of metal and acrylic. Your dentist will advise you about the best material for you.

Important: Fill in all details on the sticker below.

Dear Dentist: When you discuss this pamphlet with your patient, remove this sticker and put it on the patient's medical history or card. This will remind you and the patient that this pamphlet has been provided. Some dentists ask their patients to sign the sticker to confirm receipt of the pamphlet.

Edition number: 5

TREATMENT INFORMATION PAMPHLET

PEEL HERE

PROCEDURE: _____

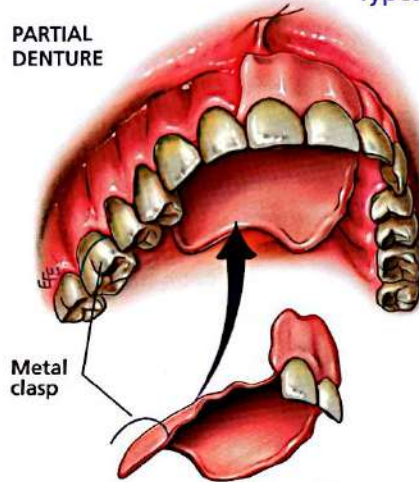
PATIENT'S NAME: _____

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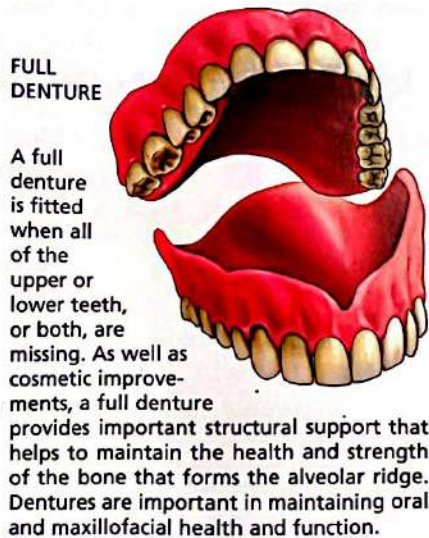
Types of dentures

PARTIAL DENTURE



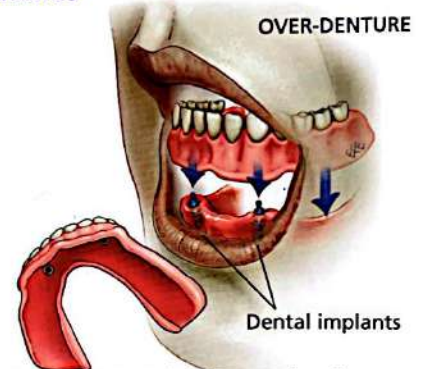
A partial denture is made to fill the space left by a few missing teeth. To hold the partial denture in position, clasps are used to secure the denture to nearby natural teeth. Precise measurements taken of your jaws, and how they relate to each other (called occlusion or bite), ensure that the partial denture functions properly with the natural teeth.

FULL DENTURE



A full denture is fitted when all of the upper or lower teeth, or both, are missing. As well as cosmetic improvements, a full denture provides important structural support that helps to maintain the health and strength of the bone that forms the alveolar ridge. Dentures are important in maintaining oral and maxillofacial health and function.

OVER-DENTURE



An over-denture is a denture that fits:

- by attachments to dental implants, or
- over the top of remaining teeth, or
- over tooth roots that have had root canal treatment.

Remaining teeth or dental implants act as anchors to secure it in place. Over-dentures are modelled in the same way as full dentures. Spaces in the dentures are designed to accommodate the retained teeth.

CHROME DENTURES

Chrome dentures have a cast metal framework that is strong, light, well hidden, and non-irritating to oral tissues. They cost more than acrylic dentures but function better and last longer in most patients. To function at their best, chrome dentures are typically used with patients who practice good oral hygiene and have healthy strong teeth. The design of the clasps keeps the denture firmly in place, minimising up and down movement and irritation to the gums. This also allows greater ability to detect hot foods and liquids, reducing the risk of scalding oral tissues. Chrome is hypoallergenic, that is, it rarely causes an allergic reaction.

Immediate denture: The dentist inserts an immediate denture at the same appointment as the teeth are extracted. The advantage is that the patient avoids a period without teeth (see page 4).

YOUR DENTIST

Talk to your dentist

This pamphlet is intended to provide general information. It is not a substitute for advice from your dentist and does not contain all known facts about dentures. Read this pamphlet carefully, and save it for reference. It should be used only in consultation with your dentist. This information may change with time. Terms are used that may require further explanation by your dentist. If you are not sure about the process of being fitted with dentures,

your dentist will be pleased to answer questions. Closely follow any instructions from your dentist. Give your dentist your full medical and dental history, including medications you have taken or are taking, reactions to medicines (especially antibiotics), and bleeding disorders. This information is confidential. If teeth need to be extracted, the ADA patient education pamphlet titled "Dental Extractions" may be helpful and is available from your dentist.

Making and fitting the dentures

Dentures are composed of artificial teeth bonded to a plastic base. The dentist makes an impression of the dental arch and remaining teeth (if any), using a special impression material.

The colour and shape of the artificial teeth can be closely matched to your natural teeth. The dentist will help you with these decisions. The dental laboratory uses the impressions and the dentist's specifications to make the dentures.

Your dentist will advise you about

how long to wear your new dentures each day. A few days or weeks are needed to become accustomed to the dentures.

Over the first few days:

- the denture may feel tight and uncomfortable
- the denture may feel bulky
- your gums may feel sore
- some people experience a gagging sensation at the back of the throat
- you may notice an increase in the amount of saliva in your mouth

- eat soft foods
- speech may be affected but will improve. Wearers of partial dentures may find their speech improves immediately because missing teeth have been replaced.
- your new dentures should be checked by your dentist within the first few days as there may be sore spots that need adjusting. Ensure that you arrange an appointment for this check and adjustment.

Denture adjustment

After some time, the denture may feel loose and awkward. Your dentist can adjust the fit. This is done by placing an inner lining in the denture. Several adjustments may be required before the final fit is satisfactory.

Over-dentures and partial dentures

usually need fewer adjustments than full dentures. People who have retained some natural teeth usually have less gum shrinkage and fewer changes in the underlying jawbone, so their dentures may retain a good fit. Loose dentures can cause irritation and ulcers of the gums

that are painful and may become infected. If your denture is loose, see your dentist to have it adjusted.

Do not try to adjust your denture yourself. It has been carefully made to fit your mouth. Home repairs end up causing more harm than good.

Cleaning your dentures



For the cleaning of dentures, many dentists recommend the use of a specially designed brush and unperfumed, mild soap or denture-cleaning cream. While brushing, hold the denture over a basin of water or towelling to avoid breakage if dropped. Be careful not to use toothbrushes and toothpastes that are too abrasive as they may damage your dentures. Do not brush too hard. Wear your spectacles while cleaning so you can see that all debris has been removed.

Clean your dentures after each meal or at least twice a day. Remove them, and rinse away food particles with warm or cold water. Some people like to use a mouthwash.

If you have a partial denture, thoroughly clean it to reduce the risk of losing more teeth. Your dentist can show you how to use a toothbrush and dental floss correctly so you can efficiently remove food particles and plaque from remaining teeth.

Gently brush both the inside and outside surfaces of your dentures with a very soft toothbrush and unperfumed, mild soap or other approved denture cleaner. Avoid the use of standard toothpastes as many brands are too abrasive.

Soaking dentures in a daily cleanser disinfects them and removes odour-causing bacteria. This only takes a few minutes and assists oral hygiene. Many good daily cleansers are available in pharmacies and supermarkets.

Do NOT use:

- hot or boiling water because the denture will warp
- abrasives
- detergents
- bleaches
- methylated spirits
- other strong chemicals of any kind.

Daily living with dentures

Insertion and removal

Your dentist will show you how to place and remove your dentures. Be sure you can do this properly before you leave the surgery. Never use force to remove a denture.

Comfort and adaptation

Even if you have worn dentures before, your new dentures may feel uncomfortable at first. Your mouth needs time to adapt to them.

Eating with dentures

Learning to eat with dentures takes practice and time. After the first few days of eating soft foods, you will want a wider range of foods. Cut food into small pieces, take small mouthfuls, and chew slowly. This helps to keep the dentures in place.

Avoid biting with the front teeth because this can cause the dentures to tip and may place excess pressure on the gums. Instead, bite with the canine teeth, the pointed teeth next to the front teeth.

Until you get used to sensing the temperature of hot food, treat hot food and hot drinks with caution. Avoid sticky food (such as toffee) and sharp or hard food, such as nuts or raw carrots.

As you gain confidence with your dentures, widen your diet to ensure healthy nutrition. Your dentist can advise you on maintaining good nutrition.

Speech

After the first week or two, most people find that dentures do not interfere significantly with speech. Sometimes certain words may be difficult to pronounce at first. It may help to repeat them aloud in front of a mirror.

If your dentures "click" when you talk, try to speak more slowly. If your denture slips when you speak, bite down gently to reposition it and swallow. Your tongue and cheek muscles will soon learn to keep it in place. If you have a persistent problem with speech, inform your dentist.

Denture adhesive

Denture adhesives can give you added confidence that your denture will not slip out of place. Your dentist can advise you about which denture adhesives are likely to work well for you. Denture adhesive is not the answer to a poorly fitting denture. If it doesn't fit well, see your dentist.



Adults of all ages can enjoy the advantages of partial dentures, full dentures or over-dentures due to advanced techniques and materials in modern prosthodontics.

Soreness

If soreness develops under a denture, call your dentist for an appointment. The denture probably needs to be adjusted. If the soreness worsens, remove the denture for at least part of the day. Before your appointment, wear the dentures for several hours. This will help the dentist determine where adjustment is needed.

Oral hygiene

Be careful to maintain good hygiene of your mouth. This is best done with a wet towelling cloth, face washer or similar material.

Simply rub the gum tissue over which the denture fits, and also rub the top of the tongue. Your dentist will show you if you are in doubt.

Protect against breakage

Dentures are delicate and break easily. When cleaning a denture, hold it over a towel or a basin of water, to cushion the fall if you drop it. Brush them gently.

If you break a denture or damage the clasp of a partial denture, stop wearing it. Telephone your dentist for an appointment.

Do NOT glue parts together because the wrong glue will permanently damage, or even ruin, the denture. Do not bend or modify a clasp of a partial denture in any way as this could break it.

Overnight care

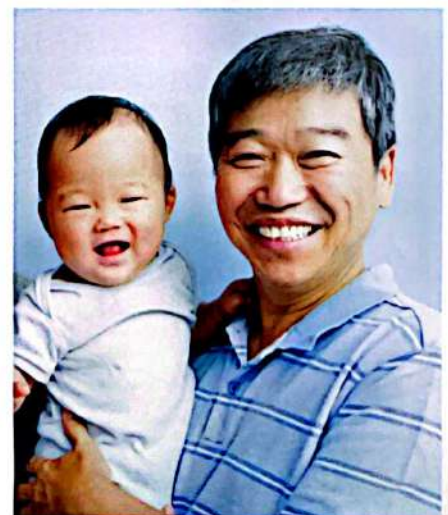
Discuss with your dentist the advantages of removing your dentures before going to bed. Dentures should be removed at night because this allows gum tissues to

rest and heal if any gum tissue is distressed. Such healing is important in preventing gum infection under the denture. Removal of full dentures also prevents grinding and clenching of the teeth which increase wear on them and other complications.

Some dentists advise that overnight storage of cleaned dentures should be in dry conditions to minimise the risks of fungal growth on denture surfaces. Other dentists advise that overnight storage should be in water. You may wish to discuss this with your dentist.

Check-ups

Regular dental check-ups are a must for all denture wearers. Your dentist will examine your mouth to make sure your denture fits well and check any teeth that remain. Visit your dentist immediately if you have sore gums or if a denture chips or breaks. Over time, dentures need to be remade due to normal wear.



Instructions for immediate dentures

For the fitting of immediate dentures, the dentist takes impressions of the remaining teeth and dental arch while the teeth are still in place. After the teeth have been extracted, the immediate dentures are placed in the mouth while you are still in the dental surgery. This helps to keep the swelling of gums to a minimum.

Following extractions, rapid changes in the gums take place as the gum tissue and jawbone heal to form a firm base for the denture.

During the healing period, you may need to visit the dentist several times for small adjustments. As immediate dentures cannot be tested in the mouth before the teeth are removed, the fit and appearance of the dentures may need to be adjusted.

The gums and jawbone take about three months to heal completely. During healing, the gums shrink and the fit of the immediate denture becomes loose. It then needs relining or possibly remaking. This is a good time to make changes

to the aesthetics of the denture, if you wish. The old immediate denture can be kept as an emergency spare.

Important points about immediate dentures

- Since the local anaesthetic is still effective for a few hours after extraction, be careful that you don't bite your tongue, lips or cheek.
- Do not drink hot fluids for at least four hours after the extraction.
- Your dentist will give you instructions as to when you should remove your dentures for cleaning. In most cases, this advice will be that you leave them in place for at least 24 hours. An appointment will be made for the dentist to remove your dentures, attend to any problems, and give you further instructions.
- If bleeding occurs in the early stages, bite firmly on a clean handkerchief or cotton wool pad for 20 minutes. This will usually help to stop any bleeding.
- Eat soft foods. Do not eat hard foods

until advised by your dentist.

- If the denture becomes loose, put it back into place immediately if you can do so without discomfort or the use of force. Keep pressing it into place with your tongue. If you are unable to replace your denture, rinse it and keep it dry in a plastic bag. Make an appointment with your dentist at once.
- Five hours after the extractions, rinse your mouth gently, leaving the dentures in. Use a mouthwash of salt and lukewarm water (one-half teaspoon of salt in a glass of water). For the next few days, rinse regularly and gently with the salt water.
- While the gums are healing, do not smoke because it impairs healing and can cause bleeding. It is best to quit.
- If you have severe pain or other serious difficulty, telephone your dentist for advice or a further appointment.
- Be certain to attend your review appointment because an adjustment is likely to be needed to improve comfort of the dentures.

Possible complications of dentures

- Even the best fitting denture can feel awkward at first. For some people, several months or more may need to pass before a denture feels comfortable.
- For people who wear both upper and lower dentures, more time is needed to become accustomed to the lower denture.
- Some people require several months before speech returns to normal. Rarely, speech therapy may be necessary. Some minor speech difficulties may persist.
- There can be additional costs when gums shrink more than expected. The denture may have to be relined or remade.
- There may be a change in facial shape due to the missing teeth and replacement by a prosthesis.
- The flow of saliva may increase; this is usually temporary.
- Although the materials and techniques of making dentures are advanced,

denture prosthodontics cannot perfectly reproduce your natural teeth.

- It is not uncommon to become discouraged for a while when getting used to the feel and appearance of a denture.
- As the shapes of gums and underlying jawbone change, and dentures wear out, they may need to be relined or remade every three to seven years. Regular examination of your mouth and dentures is advised.
- If dentures are not removed every day and cleaned properly, infections may occur. For example, a fungal infection (*Candida albicans*) can develop in the gums. Also, bacterial lung infections can occur, leading to pneumonia. Many types of bacteria and fungi can thrive on poorly cleaned dentures, leading to a range of serious illnesses and consequences. If you have any uncertainty about how best to clean your denture or any oral prosthesis, ask your dentist.
- Over time, a badly fitting denture

can cause a chronic inflammation of the gum tissue called denture stomatitis.

- If you have a dry mouth, denture retention may be difficult.

Costs of Treatment

Ask for an estimate of the likely costs of your complete course of treatment. Check to see if you are eligible for public healthcare or for a health fund rebate. The estimate should include fees for the dentures, extractions (if needed), adjustments and fittings, and related costs. If the denture is placed after extractions, there will be fairly rapid changes to the tissues that support the dentures. This requires ongoing care and eventual refitting (relining) of the denture, which is an additional cost. As the actual procedure may differ slightly from the proposed procedure, the final account may vary from the estimate, particularly when additional procedures are needed to adjust the denture or treat a complication. It is best to discuss costs with your dentist before treatment rather than afterwards.