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In this issue of our newsletter:

Why Do I Need a Bridge?

From the American Dental Association®

America's Leading advocate for oral health

What is a Bridge?

A bridge is a dental restoration that fills the space where one or more teeth are missing. The bridge restores your bite and helps keep the natural shape of your face.

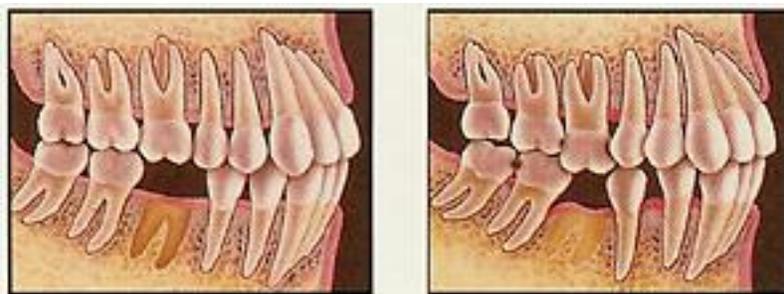
Before you get a bridge, your dentist wants you to know more about the steps involved. He or she can advise which type of bridge is best for you.

What if I Don't Replace a Missing Tooth?

Teeth work together. When you lose a tooth, the nearby teeth may tilt or drift into the empty space. The teeth in the opposite jaw may also shift up or down toward the space. This can affect your bite and place unusual stress on your teeth and jaw joints.

Teeth that have tipped or drifted are often hard to clean, as well. This makes them more at risk for tooth decay and gum disease.

When a tooth is missing, the bone around it may shrink. This can change the way the jawbone supports the lips and cheeks. Over time, this can cause the face to sag and can make you look older.

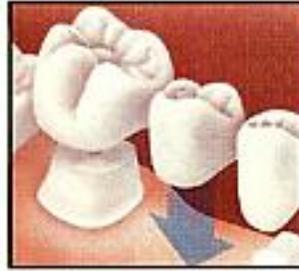


How is a Bridge Placed?

Placing a bridge usually requires more than one dental visit. On your first visit, your dentist prepares the teeth on either side of the gap. The bridge will later be attached to these teeth.

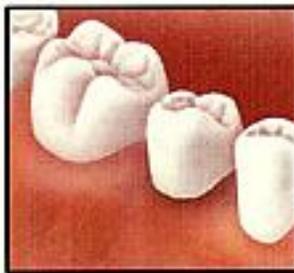


Teeth Adjacent to gap are prepared



Custom-made bridge fitted & adjusted

Your dentist then takes an impression of your teeth and the space and sends the impression to a dental laboratory. Technicians at the lab make the bridge. Your dentist will place a temporary bridge while you are waiting for the permanent one.



After adjustments are made, bridge is cemented into place.

When talking about bridges, your dentist may use these terms:

Pontic: the replacement tooth

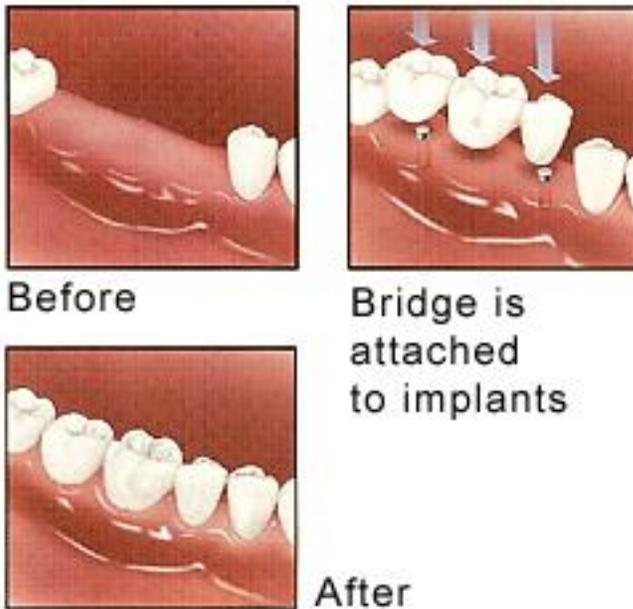
Crown: a “cap” that over the tooth

A bridge has three parts, a pontic in the middle and a crown on either side. The crowns fit over the prepared teeth next to the gap. The pontic fills the space left by the missing tooth.

The bridge is then fixed, or cements, to the prepared teeth. The bridge is permanent and cannot be taken out of your mouth without a dentist’s help. At the follow-up visit to the dentist, the bridge is fitted, adjusted and cemented in place.

Are There Different Types of Bridges?

Some patients chose to have dental implants places to support a bridge. Dental implants are posts that are surgically placed below the gums. An implant works the same way as a natural tooth. The implants fuse to the jawbone to act as a base for the bridge.



Dental implants are more common when a patient has several missing teeth. Because surgery is required, candidates for dental implants should have good general health and enough bone for support an implant.. For some patients, implants help preserve the bone where teeth have been lost.

What Materials Are Used in a Bridge?

Bridges are made from metal, ceramics, or a combination. Ceramics often are bonded to a metal alloy. The dentist thinks about the appearance and functions of the bridge and can talk about the materials that are best for you.

Caring for Your Bridge

A bridge can lose its support if the surrounding teeth or jawbone holding the bridge are damaged by dental disease. Follow these tips for good oral health:

Brush twice a day and floss or use an interdental cleaner. Interdental cleaners are specially spaced brushes or rubber, plastic or wooden devices. Brushing and cleaning between the teeth helps remove plaque, a sticky film of bacteria. Clean between your teeth and under the bridge.

- A helpful tool besides floss is a water jet. However, a water jet is not be to be used instead of flossing.
- See your dentist regularly for check-ups and professional cleanings.



- Eat a balanced diet for good health.

Look for oral care products that have the ADA Seal of Acceptance. Products that display the Seal have met the American Dental Association's Council of Scientific Affairs criteria for safety and effectiveness.

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