

Dentures

Overview

If you've lost all of your natural teeth, whether from periodontal disease, tooth decay or injury, complete dentures can replace your missing teeth and your smile. Replacing missing teeth will benefit your appearance and your health. Without support from the denture, facial muscles sag, making a person look older. You'll be able to eat and speak—things that people often take for granted until their natural teeth are lost.

There are various types of complete dentures. A conventional full denture is made and placed in the patient's mouth after the remaining teeth are removed and tissues have healed which may take several months. An immediate complete denture is inserted as soon as the remaining teeth are removed. The dentist takes measurements and makes models of the patient's jaws during a preliminary visit. With immediate dentures, the denture wearer does not have to be without teeth during the healing period.

Even if you wear full dentures, you still must take good care of your mouth. Brush your gums, tongue and palate every morning with a soft-bristled brush before you insert your dentures to stimulate circulation in your tissues and help remove plaque.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

- **What's the difference between conventional dentures and immediate dentures?**
 - Complete dentures are called "conventional" or "immediate" according to when they are made and when they are inserted into the mouth.
 - Immediate dentures are inserted immediately after the removal of the remaining teeth. To make this possible, the dentist takes measurements and makes the models of the patient's jaws during a preliminary visit.
 - An advantage of immediate dentures is that the wearer does not have to be without teeth during the healing period. However, bones and gums can shrink over time, especially during the period of healing in the first six months after the removal of teeth. When gums shrink, immediate dentures may require rebasing or relining to fit properly. A conventional denture can then be made once the tissues have healed. Healing may take at least 6-8 weeks.

- **What is an overdenture?**

- A removable denture that fits over a small number of remaining natural teeth or implants. The natural teeth must be prepared to provide stability and support for the denture. Your dentist can determine if an overdenture would be suitable for you.
- **What will dentures feel like?**
 - New dentures may feel awkward for a few weeks until you become accustomed to them. The dentures may feel loose while the muscles of your cheek and tongue learn to keep them in place.
 - It is not unusual to experience minor irritation or soreness. You may find that saliva flow temporarily increases. As your mouth becomes accustomed to the dentures, these problems should diminish. One or more follow-up appointments with the dentist are generally needed after a denture is inserted. If any problem persists, particularly irritation or soreness, be sure to consult your dentist.
- **Will dentures make me look different?**
 - Dentures can be made to closely resemble your natural teeth so that little change in appearance will be noticeable. Dentures may even improve the look of your smile and help fill out the appearance of your face and profile.
- **Will I be able to eat with my dentures?**
 - Eating will take a little practice. Start with soft foods cut into small pieces. Chew slowly using both sides of your mouth at the same time to prevent the dentures from tipping. As you become accustomed to chewing, add other foods until you return to your normal diet.
 - Continue to chew food using both sides of the mouth at the same time. Be cautious with hot or hard foods and sharp-edged bones or shells.
- **Will dentures change how I speak?**
 - Pronouncing certain words may require practice. Reading out loud and repeating troublesome words will help. If your dentures "click" while you're talking, speak more slowly.
 - You may find that your dentures occasionally slip when you laugh, cough or smile. Reposition the dentures by gently biting down and swallowing. If a speaking problem persists, consult your dentist.
- **How long should I wear my dentures?**
 - Your dentist will provide instructions about how long dentures should be kept in place. During the first few days, you may be advised to wear them most of the time, including while you sleep. After the initial adjustment period, you may be instructed to remove the dentures before going to bed. This allows gum tissues to rest and promotes oral health. Generally, it is not desirable to wear dentures continuously.

- **Should I use a denture adhesive?**
 - Denture adhesive can provide additional retention for well-fitting dentures. Denture adhesives are not the solution for old, ill-fitting dentures. A poorly fitting denture, which causes constant irritation over a long period, may contribute to the development of sores. These dentures may need a reline or need to be replaced. If your dentures begin to feel loose, or cause pronounced discomfort, consult with your dentist immediately.

- **How do I take care of my dentures?**
 - Dentures are very delicate and may break if dropped even a few inches. Stand over a folded towel or a basin of water when handling dentures. When you are not wearing them, store your dentures away from children and pets.
 - Like natural teeth, dentures must be brushed daily to remove food deposits and plaque. Brushing helps prevent dentures from becoming permanently stained and helps your mouth stay healthy. It's best to use a brush designed for cleaning dentures. A toothbrush with soft bristles can also be used. Avoid using hard-bristled brushes that can damage dentures.
 - Some denture wearers use hand soap or mild dishwashing liquid, which are both acceptable for cleaning dentures. Avoid using other powdered household cleansers, which may be too abrasive. Also, avoid using bleach, as this may whiten the pink portion of the denture.
 - Your dentist can recommend a denture cleanser. Look for denture cleansers with the ADA Seal of Acceptance. Products with the ADA Seal have been evaluated for safety and effectiveness.
 - The first step in cleaning dentures is to rinse away loose food particles thoroughly. Moisten the brush and apply denture cleanser. Brush every surface, scrubbing gently to avoid damage.
 - Dentures may lose their shape if they are allowed to dry out. When they are not worn, dentures should be placed in a denture cleanser soaking solution or in water. Your dentist can recommend the best method. Never place dentures in hot water, which could cause them to warp.
 - Ultrasonic cleaners are also used to care for dentures. However, using an ultrasonic cleaner does not replace a thorough daily brushing.

- **Can I make minor adjustments or repairs to my dentures?**
 - You can seriously damage your dentures and harm your health by trying to adjust or repair your dentures. A denture that is not made to fit properly can cause irritation and sores.

- See your dentist if your dentures break, crack, chip, or if one of the teeth becomes loose. A dentist can often make the necessary adjustments or repairs on the same day. A person who lacks the proper training will not be able to reconstruct the denture. This can cause greater damage to the denture and may cause problems in your mouth. Glue sold over-the-counter often contains harmful chemicals and should not be used on dentures.
- **Will my dentures need to be replaced?**
 - Over time, dentures will need to be relined, rebased, or remade due to normal wear. To reline or rebase a denture, the dentist uses the existing denture teeth and refits the denture base or makes a new denture base. Dentures may need to be replaced if they become loose and the teeth show signs of significant wear. Dentures become loose because a mouth naturally changes with age. Bone and gum ridges can recede or shrink, causing jaws to align differently. Shrinking ridges can cause dentures to fit less securely. Loose dentures can cause health problems, including sores and infections. A loose denture also makes chewing more difficult and may change your facial features. It's important to replace worn or poorly-fitting dentures before they cause problems.
- **Must I do anything special to care for my mouth?**
 - Even with full dentures, you still need to take good care of your mouth. Every morning, brush your gums, tongue and palate with a soft-bristled brush before you put in your dentures. This removes plaque and stimulates circulation in the mouth. Selecting a balanced diet for proper nutrition is also important for maintaining a healthy mouth.
- **How often should I schedule dental appointments?**
 - Your dentist will advise you about how often to visit. Regular dental check-ups are important. The dentist will examine your mouth to see if your dentures continue to fit properly. The dentist also examines your mouth for signs of oral diseases including cancer
 - With regular professional care, a positive attitude and persistence, you can become one of the millions of people who wear their dentures with a smile.