

Replacing missing or lost teeth



It may be important to replace missing or lost teeth. When teeth are missing or lost, it can become more difficult to chew food and speak clearly. Because teeth also support your cheeks and lips, tooth loss can let the area around your mouth sag. In some cases, a missing or lost tooth leaves a space that lets other teeth tilt or move out of place. This can affect your ability to bite down evenly when chewing. Although this is more common when primary teeth are missing, this article will focus only on replacing permanent teeth.

There are several ways to replace a missing or lost tooth, including removable and fixed dentures. This article will focus on fixed dentures only. Fixed partial dentures can be used to fill the space left when one or a few teeth are missing or lost. There are 2 basic types: tooth supported and implant supported.

TOOTH SUPPORTED

A fixed partial denture has artificial teeth that fill the space where your teeth are missing or lost. The tooth-supported fixed partial denture also has extra artificial teeth that are cemented over your natural teeth on one or both sides of the gap. Your dentist will need to reshape your natural teeth to mount the artificial ones over them. Once the fixed partial denture is cemented in place, you will not be able to take it out. Talk to your dentist if it is loose or does not seem to fit right.

IMPLANT SUPPORTED

An implant is a metal post that is surgically placed in the jawbone. Once it is placed in the jaw, bone grows around the implant to hold it in place. It acts like an artificial tooth root. An implant can be used to support a single replacement tooth or a fixed partial denture if you are missing more than 1 tooth.

Implants may be placed in 1 day or may require multiple visits, depending on several factors such as the condition of your mouth and jaw, as well as your overall health.

Because dental implant placement is a type of surgery and requires good bone health, it may not be the right choice for everyone. Talk to your dentist about whether implants are an option for you.

DAILY CARE

You may need to take a little extra time with your regular oral care after a fixed partial denture is placed. There will be room under the replacement teeth where food and debris can get trapped. Certain products, such as dental floss threaders and water flossers, can help you clean beneath a fixed partial denture. Tiny brushes also can be used to clean around implants. Talk to your dental hygienist about available options and how to use them. You may need to try a few before finding one that works well for you.

To keep the rest of your mouth healthy:

- brush twice a day with a toothpaste that contains fluoride;
- clean between your teeth daily;
- eat a healthy diet: limit sugary snacks or drinks;
- look for the ADA Seal of Acceptance to find dental products that are safe and effective;
- see your dentist regularly so that he or she can check your oral health and make sure that your fixed partial denture fits properly and is not chipped or cracked.

CONCLUSION

Missing or lost teeth can cause problems with chewing, speaking, and biting together evenly. There are ways to replace missing or lost teeth and restore your mouth. Talk to your dentist about options that might be right for you. ■

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