

BRIDGES

A bridge is a dental restoration that replaces one or more missing teeth. It is typically made up of an artificial tooth fused between 2 crowns (a hollow, artificial tooth that fits over a natural tooth or a dental implant).

The bridge is held firmly in place by natural teeth on each side of the missing one(s) or by dental implants (an artificial root made of titanium metal that is inserted into the jawbone to replace the root of the natural tooth). A bridge is permanent and cannot be removed.

HOW A BRIDGE CAN HELP

Ideal teeth are natural teeth, but sometimes a tooth is badly damaged or lost. If a tooth is lost, it is important to replace it with an artificial tooth as soon as possible. This will prevent the remaining teeth from drifting out of line and possibly causing jaw problems. Teeth that are out of line are harder to clean and are more likely to get periodontal disease (gum disease) and cavities. If one or more of your teeth are missing, your dentist may suggest replacing your missing teeth with a bridge.

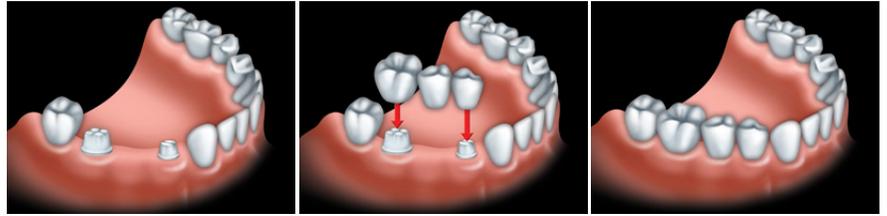
HOW A BRIDGE IS DONE

- If you have healthy teeth on each side of a missing tooth (or teeth), your dentist files down the 2 healthy teeth to prepare them for the bridge. If you don't have healthy teeth or enough teeth to support a bridge, dental implants may be surgically placed.
- Next, your dentist makes a model of your teeth by taking impressions (molds). The model is used to custom-make the artificial tooth (or teeth) and 2 crowns as one piece. This piece is called a bridge.
- Meanwhile, your dentist places a temporary bridge in your mouth to protect the exposed teeth and gums.
- During your second visit, your dentist removes the temporary bridge and places the custom-made bridge in your mouth. The crowns are either cemented to your 2 healthy teeth or attached to your dental implants on each side of the missing tooth (or teeth).

TYPES OF BRIDGES

There are different types of dental bridges. Your dentist or prosthodontist will recommend the most appropriate one depending on the location of the missing tooth (or teeth) and the condition of your teeth, mouth and gums.

TRADITIONAL BRIDGES are used if there are natural teeth on each side of the gap where the tooth is missing. As an alternative to a bridge, your dentist may suggest a single implant to replace a missing tooth between 2 healthy teeth. An implant will prevent you from having to get your healthy teeth filed down in preparation for the crowns.



With a traditional bridge, healthy teeth on each side of the missing tooth are prepared for crowns. The custom-made artificial tooth is fused to 2 crowns. This is called a bridge. A bridge is permanent and cannot be removed.]

IMPLANT BRIDGES are used if you don't have healthy teeth or enough teeth to support a bridge, or when several or all teeth are missing. A custom-made bridge is anchored to the dental implants. Your dentist will determine if dental implants are right for you.



With an implant bridge, dental implants are surgically placed into the jawbone. A custom-made bridge is anchored to the dental implants. Implant bridges can be used when all your teeth are missing.

RESIN-BONDED BRIDGES, also known as "Maryland" bridges, are used when the missing teeth are in the front of the mouth. With this type of bridge, the artificial teeth are fused to metal bands and cemented to the back of your natural teeth.

CANTILEVER BRIDGES are used when there are healthy teeth on only one side of the missing tooth or teeth. This procedure involves anchoring the artificial tooth over one or more of your natural adjacent teeth.

CARING FOR YOUR BRIDGE

If you take good care of your bridge, it should generally last for about 10 years, or perhaps longer. Like natural teeth, bridges need to be brushed and flossed every day. Your dentist will show you how to use a floss threader to floss under and around the artificial tooth (or teeth) in the middle of the bridge. Regular dental visits and professional cleanings are also important.

