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WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT DENTURES

About 23 million people are completely edentulous (toothless); 90 percent of people experiencing tooth loss have dentures, and about 15 percent have dentures made each year, according to the American College of Prosthodontists.



What are the types of dentures?

People who have lost all or most of their teeth are candidates for complete dentures, which replace all of the teeth. The following outlines other types of dentures:

Partial dentures are for people who have some natural teeth remaining; they can fill in the space created by missing teeth and prevent other teeth from changing position. This type of denture usually consists of replacement teeth attached to a pink plastic base, which is held in place by a metal framework and clasps, or natural-looking connectors called precision attachments.

Conventional dentures are placed in the mouth after any remaining teeth are removed and the tissue has healed, which may take a few months. Immediate dentures are placed in the mouth the same day that the remaining teeth are removed. This means you won't have to go without teeth during the healing period, but your denture may need to be relined or remade after healing is complete.

Overdentures fit over a small number of remaining teeth or implants after they have been prepared by the dentist. Your dentist will usually try to preserve your remaining natural teeth. Saving these teeth can help preserve your jawbone and provide support for the denture.

How are dentures created?

Dentures are made of acrylic resin, sometimes in combination with various metals. The process of getting dentures takes about three to six weeks and consists of several appointments. Your dentist will take impressions and measurements of your jaw and create models to determine the appliance's shape and position. Your dentures' color, shape and fit will be assessed during multiple try-in appointments before the final appliance is cast. After you receive the dentures, your dentist or prosthodontist will make adjustments as necessary.

What should I expect from my new dentures?

Your dentures may feel awkward and loose for a few weeks as your cheek and tongue muscles learn to keep them in place. Your speech may be temporarily affected, and saliva flow may increase for a short time. It's also normal to experience some minor irritation and soreness. As your mouth becomes accustomed to the dentures, these problems should subside. If they persist, talk with your dentist.

For how long should I wear my dentures?

Your dentist will provide you with instructions about how long to wear your dentures and when to remove them. You may be asked to wear them all the time, including during sleep, for the first several days to identify areas that need adjustment. It is likely your dentist will recommend that you remove your dentures at night.

How should I care for my dentures?

Dentures should be brushed every day to remove food particles and plaque and to prevent staining. After rinsing the appliance, gently brush all of the surfaces using a soft-bristle toothbrush and nonabrasive denture cleaner (not toothpaste). When you're not wearing your dentures, keep them in a safe place, and soak them in water to keep them from losing their shape. If you use a denture adhesive, make sure to follow all of the product's usage instructions carefully.

Before inserting your dentures, brush your gums, tongue and the roof of your mouth with a soft-bristled brush to stimulate tissue circulation and remove plaque. In addition to maintaining good oral hygiene, you should continue to see your dentist for follow-up appointments and regular checkups. If you encounter any problems with your dentures' fit, or they become damaged, contact your dentist.