



Dental Treatment

3 Tooth Replacement Options



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ADA American Dental Association®

America's leading advocate for oral health

If you are missing one or more teeth, you may notice how it affects your smile and your diet. Your teeth are designed to work together to help you chew, speak and smile. Replacing a missing tooth (or teeth) allows all of your teeth to continue to work together. Plus, it helps protect your remaining teeth.



Here are some problems that can happen if you do not replace a missing tooth:

- Missing teeth may affect how you speak.
- A missing molar (back tooth) can make it difficult to chew.
- When a tooth is lost and not replaced, your remaining teeth can move and change your bite.
- You may have tooth or jaw pain from shifted or misaligned teeth.
- Bone loss can occur around the missing tooth. This may cause your remaining teeth to become loose over time.
- Loss of teeth and bone can make your face sag. You may look older.

Luckily, your dentist has some treatment options for replacing missing teeth. Replacement teeth should last for years, so it is important to choose a treatment that is right for you. This booklet discusses three options your dentist may suggest, depending on your needs:

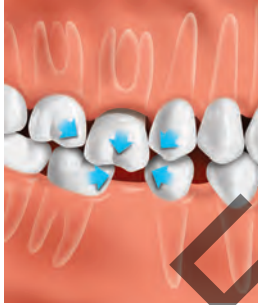
- **Removable Partial Dentures** (page 4)
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Effects of a missing tooth

Drifting Teeth



Position of teeth immediately after a tooth is lost.



If the tooth is not replaced, other teeth can drift out of position and change the bite.

Facial Collapse

Before loss of teeth



After loss of teeth



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As shown here, when teeth are lost and not replaced, bone loss causes the face to sag and look older. The chin moves forward and upward and appears pointed. The mouth loses some of its shape, and the lip line straightens. Pouches become pronounced on either side of the lower jaw.

Removable Partial Dentures

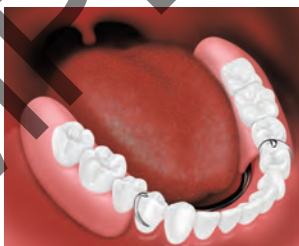
Removable partial dentures fill the gap when one or more teeth are missing. The denture usually has replacement teeth attached to a metal base or an acrylic (plastic) one that matches the color of your gums. Partial dentures can easily be taken out of your mouth for cleaning or storing while you sleep. They are held in place by a clasp that attaches to your natural teeth or another form of attachment.

Your dentist may also recommend crowns, or "caps," on your natural teeth to help hold the denture. Crowns may improve the way a removable partial denture fits your mouth.

Removable Partial Denture Placement



Partial denture above gums



Partial denture in place



Partial denture in mouth
(metal clasps on two teeth
are visible)

Your dentist will adjust your partial denture so it fits comfortably. If for some reason it becomes uncomfortable, call your dentist. Do not try to adjust your partial denture yourself.

Advantages of removable partial dentures:

- They are usually less expensive than fixed bridges or implants when replacing multiple teeth.
- They do not require teeth next to the space to be reshaped.
- They are usually easier to repair than fixed bridges.
- You can remove them yourself for cleaning and when sleeping.

Disadvantages of removable partial dentures:

- They can be less stable than other choices.
- They can break or be lost.
- They may take longer to get used to wearing because it could take several appointments for your dentist to achieve the right fit.
- Some people are embarrassed to take them out at night and for cleaning.
- They may need more frequent replacement than implants or a fixed bridge.



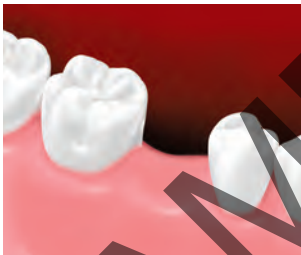
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These removable partial dentures each replace five missing teeth. They can be removed for easy care and cleaning. Removable partial dentures attach to the natural teeth with metal clasps or acrylic attachments. Your dentist will help you choose the right style for your needs.

Fixed Bridges

Like a removable partial denture, a **fixed bridge** fills the space where one or more teeth have been lost. Unlike removable partial dentures, a fixed bridge is bonded or cemented into place, and only a dentist can remove it. An artificial tooth, called a **pontic**, takes the place of the missing tooth. The pontic is secured to the natural teeth on each side of the space using crowns. To fit the crowns, a dentist has to permanently reshape these teeth.

Fixed Bridge Placement



1. Missing tooth



2. To replace a missing tooth with a conventional three-unit bridge, teeth next to the gap are reshaped.



3. The custom-made bridge is placed over the prepared teeth.



4. After adjustments are made, the bridge is cemented into place.

Advantages of fixed bridges:

- They can look, feel and function like natural teeth.
- They do not require removal for cleaning.
- They may cost less than implants.

Disadvantages of fixed bridges:

- They affect the teeth next to the missing tooth—once those teeth are prepared for placement of the bridge, they will permanently lose their natural look and shape.
- It may require extra effort to clean under the pontic.
- They are likely to be more expensive than a removable partial denture.
- Placing a bridge usually takes more than one dental visit. On your first visit, your dentist prepares the teeth on either side of the gap. The bridge will be attached to these teeth at a later appointment.



Implants

Implants are metal posts that are surgically placed into the upper or lower jawbone, where they function as a sturdy anchor for a replacement tooth. Many people choose implants to replace a single tooth, several teeth, or to support a full set of dentures.

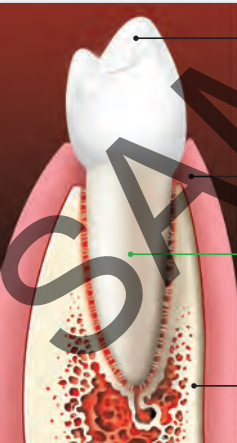


Missing tooth

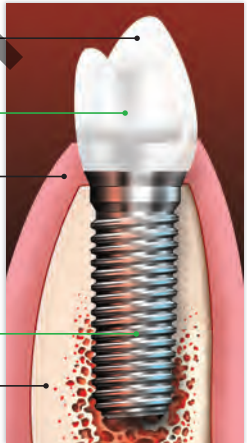


Missing tooth replaced by a dental implant

Natural Tooth



Dental Implant



Implant-Supported Bridge



1. Missing teeth



2. A bridge is placed on implants



3. After the bridge is placed

You may want to choose dental implants if:

- Your dentures are not comfortable
- You are not happy with your removable partial dentures
- You do not want your other teeth to be reshaped to support a bridge restoration

Most people find that an implant is a good replacement for their missing tooth because it is secure and stable.

Placing a tooth implant requires a surgical procedure, so it is not an option for everyone. You should be in good health and cleared by your doctor before scheduling any implant surgery.

You may be a good candidate for an implant if:

- You are in good overall health
- You have adequate bone to support the implant, or are able to have surgery to build up the area needing the implant
- You are ready to commit to a daily oral care routine and to regular dental visits

If you have a chronic illness like diabetes or high blood pressure, you may not be a good candidate for implants because you may need more time to heal after surgery. Drinking alcohol and using tobacco or e-cigarettes can also slow healing. Your dentist can help you decide if implant treatment is a good option for you.



Implants

Advantages of implants:

- An implant is most similar to a natural tooth and often feels more comfortable.
- Nearby teeth remain unchanged and do not have to be involved in the placement procedure.
- They are a good value because they can last a lifetime with good care.
- Implants are the only replacement option that may help prevent shrinkage of the jawbone from tooth loss.
- They may fit better and be more comfortable than removable partial dentures.

Disadvantages of implants:

- They require a surgical procedure to place them.
- Implant placement will take longer and may require more dental visits than other options.
- They may cost more than other treatments.

Talk to your dentist. You can get answers to your questions, and together you can decide which option will work best for you: removable partial dentures, fixed bridges or implants.

Comparison Chart

Fill in this chart as you discuss your tooth replacement options with your dentist. Then, use it to help you decide which option is best for you.

	Removable Partial Dentures	Fixed Bridges	Implants
Length of treatment/ # of visits needed			
Cost			
Durability			
Length of recovery			
Ease of eating and drinking			
Comfort in mouth			
Natural-looking			
Other concerns			

Dental Dictionary

Here is a list of words that were used in this brochure. Your dentist may refer to these terms when discussing your treatment plan with you.

Attachment or Abutment tooth: The prepared teeth on either side of the gap that hold the fixed bridge in place.

Bridge: A tooth replacement option that fills the space where one or more teeth are missing by permanently connecting a replacement tooth or teeth into place.

Crown: A “cap” that is placed over an implant to serve as a replacement tooth.

Implant: A tooth replacement option in which a metal post is surgically placed in the upper or lower jaw bone and acts as a support for a replacement tooth or teeth.

Partial denture: A tooth replacement option in which the replacement teeth are fixed to a metal or acrylic (plastic) base. It has clasps that attach to your natural teeth to hold the denture in place. It is removed daily for cleaning and while sleeping.

ADA Healthy Smile Tips

- Brush your teeth twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste.
- Clean between your teeth daily.
- Eat a healthy diet that limits sugary beverages and snacks.
- See your dentist regularly for prevention and treatment of oral disease.

For more information about taking care of your mouth and teeth, visit **MouthHealthy.org**, the ADA's website just for patients.

mouthhealthy™

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