

# Dentures

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## What are dentures?

- When a person is missing [teeth](#), he or she may experience a variety of problems. The person may become less confident in their smile and have difficulty speaking and eating certain foods.
- [Dentures](#) are appliances that are custom made to replace a person's missing teeth and restore the appearance and oral functions that were lost.
- The [denture](#) can be either a full denture or a partial denture.
- A full denture is used when all of the person's teeth are missing and a partial denture is used when only some of the teeth are missing.

## What are the different types of dentures?

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**Complete Dentures:** Complete dentures are made of a [plastic](#) base that is colored in order to replicate gum tissue and supports a full set of plastic or porcelain teeth. The traditional full denture is held in the mouth by forming a seal with the gums. They can also be held in place by attaching to [dental implants](#) that are surgically placed in the bone of the jaws. This treatment is much more expensive than the traditional complete denture.

**Partial Dentures:** Partial dentures can either be made with a plastic base or a metal framework that supports the number of teeth that need to be replaced. It is held in the mouth by using clasps and rests that are carefully adapted around the natural teeth. The partial denture that uses a metal framework is the traditional design, due to the rigidity and strength of the metal. Plastic partial dentures have normally been used as emergency or temporary replacements of missing teeth, allowing the gums and bone to heal before a definitive restorative solution is obtained. Recently, however, various materials such as Valplast have been developed to provide durable, flexible alternatives in certain situations.

### **How are dentures made?**

After a tooth is extracted or lost, the tooth socket starts to fill in with bone and the gum tissue heals and changes shape. This process takes a few months until the gums and bone reach a stable shape. After this time a conventional full denture is made, preferably about 8 to 12 weeks after the teeth were extracted or lost from the mouth.

The process starts by taking a series of impressions or molds of the oral tissues that will support the denture. A dental lab will use these impressions to make models of the patient's mouth. The dentist and laboratory technician will then slowly start building the dentures on these models and transferring them to the patient's mouth at each step to ensure proper fit, establish a proper bite, and ensure that the appearance and esthetics of the denture are desirable. The patient will generally need to be seen by the dentist once per week for about 4 to 5 weeks until the denture is complete. The patient will then need to return occasionally during the first month after the denture is delivered to have adjustments made.

An immediate denture can often be made so that the patient has something to wear the same day the teeth are removed. This type of denture is made before the teeth are extracted and is put in place the day the teeth are removed. Sometimes the back teeth are taken out first and the front teeth are left in place until the day the denture is delivered. This type of denture doesn't fit the bone and gum tissue as intimately as a conventional denture, so it requires more adjustments during the healing stage. An immediate denture is best used as a temporary appliance until a conventional denture can be made after all of the gum and bone healing is complete.

### **Are there alternatives to dentures?**

There are two other ways missing teeth can be replaced -- with [bridges](#) and implants.

**Bridges:** A [bridge](#) replaces missing teeth by placing crowns on the teeth next to the space and attaching a fake tooth to both of the crowns. Bridges are made from gold, porcelain fused to gold, all porcelain, or zirconium. Bridges can only replace about two to three missing teeth in a

row, depending on the location. Since bridges are cemented in place, they are considered a "fixed, or permanent denture."

**Implants:** An implant is a metal post that is inserted into the bone of the upper or lower jaw. This post is then used to replace a single tooth by attaching a [crown](#) to it, or multiple teeth by attaching a bridge to multiple implants. Implants are the most expensive option for tooth replacement, but implants simulate natural teeth better than any of the other options.



## [QUESTION](#)

[What causes tooth decay? See Answer](#)

**Will dentures affect the way of a person looks, feels, eats, and speaks?**

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Dentures can restore or even enhance a person's appearance and be virtually undetectable. It takes some time to find the best way to insert and take out the dentures, and the gums will be a little sore in places at first. It is very important to return to the dentist often during the first few weeks to adjust the parts of the denture that are irritating the oral tissues.

Eating with the dentures in place requires some practice. It is best to start with soft foods, chewing food equally on both sides of the mouth and slowly introducing more solid foods. Chewy or sticky foods should be avoided. Once the cheeks and tongue get used to the denture, they will begin to automatically help keep the denture in place.

Speaking also requires practice but will become easier with repetition. With exaggerated movements such as yawning or laughing, the denture may become dislodged at first. If it

continues, the denture may need to be adjusted or relined (refit). The denture may cause an increased production of saliva at first, but it will reduce back to normal.

### **Are dentures worn throughout the day?**

Dentures are generally worn during the day and taken out at night to give the oral tissues time to relax. During the first few days after receiving the denture, however, it needs to remain in the mouth even when sleeping to best identify areas that need to be adjusted. This is especially important after receiving an immediate denture, for the gum tissues will swell after the teeth are extracted or lost and then may not permit the denture to be reinserted if taken out.

### **How does one take care of dentures?**

Dentures must be handled with great care and placed in a container of water or denture cleaner when not being worn. They should never be placed in hot water, for they can be damaged or warped. They must be cleaned daily using a soft [toothbrush](#) with soap and water. The mouth should be rinsed daily without the dentures in place to clean off any plaque and reduce the risk of infection like [candidiasis](#).

There are a lot of different denture products that can be purchased at any drugstore to help with caring for and cleaning dentures.

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