

Long Term Care of Your New Crown or Bridge

After Cementation

Now that your crown or bridge has been cemented there are a few things to expect and to care for. Initially you may experience some sensitivity to cold for a few weeks afterwards as the tooth may be slightly irritated by the cement. Sensitivity toothpaste general helps (i.e. Pronamel by Sensodyne or Crest for Sensitive Teeth). If, after a couple days your “bite” seems off or it just doesn’t feel normal, please call our office for a slight adjustment.

Dental Crowns and dental bridges are devices that can last a long time (10 to 15 years) if proper maintenance measures are regularly conducted.

Oral Hygiene

The most sophisticated and expensive restorations will have a very short lifespan in the absence of thorough oral hygiene practiced on a daily basis.

It is extremely important to maintain excellent oral hygiene with your new crown or bridge. Some people have the misconception that a crowned tooth no longer needs to be maintained. Crowns and bridges are still susceptible to decay near the gum-line the same as a natural tooth.

The crown strengthens the portion of the tooth above the gum-line but this margin area requires special care. Normal brushing and flossing is a must. Additional use of a fluoride rinse (i.e. Act or Flurogard), and a high fluoride content toothpaste or gel (i.e. Prevident 5000 or Gel Kam) are excellent for preventing additional root decay. These additional aids are extremely important for patients with a high decay rate and/or a history of periodontal disease.

Fixed bridges require additional cleaning under the pontic (missing tooth). Since this “false tooth” is connected to the adjacent teeth a bridge threader or floss threader is used to thread floss under it to remove plaque. These are readily available at most pharmacies. We would be happy to demonstrate how to use them.

Good oral hygiene is vitally important if you want to keep your crown or crowns and bridge for a long time. Brushing your gums and tongue along with your teeth will keep your mouth healthy.

What may happen in the absence of proper oral hygiene?

After eating and/or drinking, dental plaque can accumulate on the surface of teeth, especially near the gums. If the plaque is not removed, the bacteria from dental plaque can *penetrate under the dental crowns*, dissolving the cement and causing irreversible damage to the dental tissues.

This process can lead to the *effective destruction of the tooth's structure*. There are situations when spontaneous teeth fractures occur under old prosthetic restorations without any preliminary signs.

Do not overload your crown or bridge

No prosthetic device, no matter how sophisticated and expensive, can come close to the strength and resistance of healthy natural teeth.

Most all crowns and bridges have a ceramic outer layer or are all-ceramic. These materials are very strong and color stable, however, they still have potential to fracture the same as a natural tooth. As a rule of thumb, don't do anything with a crown or bridge that could damage a natural tooth. **Avoid Chewing Ice.** The extreme temperature change greatly increases the fracture of porcelain and natural teeth. It is best to avoid biting on extremely hard pieces of food (nuts, pistachio shells, very hard bread crumbs/crust, etc.)

Report any discomfort:

- Toothaches or various levels and intensities
- Pain or discomfort when biting down on something
- The feeling that the restoration is "too high"
- Pain in the jaw muscles
- Pain in the TMJ joint or unusual cracks in the joint
- Swelling, bleeding or pain in the gums or receding gums
- The crown or bridge becomes loose
- A foul smell or an abnormal taste appears
- The "look" of the crown or bridge changes (i.e., the shade becomes darker)
- Any other unusual changes

It is best to report these changes as soon as they become noticeable.