

Dentures

What is a denture?

People wear dentures to replace lost or missing teeth so they can enjoy a healthy [diet](#) and smile with confidence. Dentures are made of either acrylic (plastic) or metal.

A 'complete' or 'full' denture is one which replaces all the natural teeth in either the upper or lower [jaw](#).

A 'partial' denture fills in the spaces left by lost or missing teeth. It may be fastened to your natural teeth with metal clasps or 'precision attachments'.



Why should I wear dentures?

Full dentures, to replace all your own teeth, fit snugly over your gums. They will help you to eat comfortably and speak clearly, and will improve your confidence and self-esteem.

Partial dentures replace teeth that are missing and can sometimes be supported by the teeth you have left. If you have gaps between your teeth, then your other teeth may move to take up some of the space, so you could end up with crooked or tilted teeth. This could affect the way you bite and could damage your other teeth.

How soon can I have a denture after my teeth are taken out?

Usually dentures can be fitted straight after your teeth have been removed. These are called 'immediate dentures'. You will need to visit the dentist beforehand for them to take measurements and impressions of your mouth.

With immediate dentures you don't have to be without teeth while your gums are healing. However, bone and gums can shrink over time, especially during the first six months after your teeth have been taken out. If your gums shrink, your immediate dentures may need relining, adjusting or even replacing. Your dentist will be able to talk to you about this.

Sometimes your dentist may advise you to wait until your gums are healed before having your dentures, as this can sometimes provide a better fit. Healing may take several months.

Who will make and fit my denture?

Your dentist may take measurements and impressions of your mouth, then order your dentures from a dental technician. However, if you would prefer, you can ask to visit a clinical dental technician yourself.

Clinical dental technicians are dental technicians who have taken a further qualification to allow them to provide dentures directly to you. If you have full dentures, you can visit a clinical dental technician without seeing a dentist. But you should still visit your dentist regularly, as often as they recommend, so they can check the rest of your mouth, pick up any problems and check the fit of your dentures.

A clinical dental technician can fit you with partial dentures rather than your dentist. You would need to see your dentist first, and they will give you a treatment plan and a certificate of oral health. This must be

given to a clinical dental technician at a dental laboratory for them to treat you.

Will dentures make me look different?

Replacing lost or missing teeth is very good for your health and appearance. A complete or full denture replaces your natural teeth and gives support to your cheeks and lips. Without this support, sagging facial muscles can make a person look older and they will find it harder to eat and speak properly.

Dentures can be made to closely match your natural teeth so that your appearance hardly changes. Modern dentures may even improve the look of your smile and help fill out the appearance of your face.

Will I be able to eat with dentures?

Eating will take a little practice. Start with soft foods cut into small pieces. Chew slowly, using both sides of your mouth at the same time to stop the denture from moving. As you become more used to your denture, add other foods until you get back to your normal healthy diet.

Will dentures change how I speak?

Pronouncing certain words may take practice. Reading out loud and repeating difficult words will help.

If you find that your dentures occasionally slip when you laugh, cough or smile, reposition them by gently biting down and swallowing. If this continues see your dentist.

How long should I wear my dentures?

During the first few days, your dentist may advise you to wear them for most of the time, including while you are asleep. After your mouth gets used to your dentures your dentist may advise that you take them out before going to bed. This allows your gums to rest and helps keep your mouth healthy. When you remove your dentures at night, it is best to store them in a small amount of water to stop them warping.

My upper denture fits fine, so why am I having problems with my lower plate?

The upper denture usually has much more suction to hold it in place. There is much less gum support in the lower jaw, and the lower denture may feel more wobbly as it has to be balanced between your cheeks and your tongue.

After a little while you will learn the shape of your new denture and how to keep it in place, even when you open your mouth wide.

Should I use a denture fixative?

Dentures are custom made to fit your mouth and you shouldn't need a denture fixative. However, over time, dentures may become loose and not fit as well. When this happens, some people prefer to use a fixative for a short time before having them replaced. A poorly fitting denture may cause irritation and sores. This can often happen if you have worn 'immediate' dentures for some time.

Must I do anything special to care for my mouth?

Even with full dentures, you still need to take good care of your mouth. Every morning and evening, brush your gums, tongue and the roof of your mouth with a soft brush. This removes plaque and helps the blood circulation in your mouth. If you wear partial dentures, it is even more important that you brush your teeth thoroughly every day. This will help stop tooth [decay](#) and [gum disease](#) that can lead to you losing more of your teeth. Your dentist may refer you to the hygienist to have your remaining natural teeth cleaned regularly.

How do I take care of my dentures?

Dentures may break if you drop them. Always clean your dentures over a bowl of water or a folded towel in case you drop them.

To clean your denture, the general rule is: brush, soak, brush. Brush your dentures before soaking, to help remove any bits of food. Using an effervescent (fizzy) denture cleaner will help remove stubborn stains and leave your denture feeling fresher - always follow the manufacturer's instructions. Then brush the dentures again, as you would your own teeth, being careful not to scrub too hard as this may cause

grooves in the surface.

Most dentists advise using toothpaste and a small- to medium-headed toothbrush. Make sure you clean all the surfaces of the dentures, including the surface which touches your gums. This is especially important if you use any kind of denture fixative.

If you notice a build up of stains or scale, have your denture cleaned by your dentist or hygienist.

For more information on cleaning your dentures, look out for our 'Tell me about' leaflet [Denture cleaning](#).

How long will my dentures last?

As long as you treat your dentures well, they should last several years. However, your dentures will need to be relined or re-made because of normal wear or a change in the shape of your mouth. Bone and gum ridges can shrink, causing your jaws to meet differently. Loose dentures can cause health problems, including sores and infections, not to mention discomfort. A loose or badly fitting denture can also make eating and talking more difficult. It is important to replace worn or badly fitting dentures before they cause problems.

How often should I see my dentist?

Regular dental check-ups and having your teeth professionally cleaned are vital for keeping your teeth and gums healthy. Most dentists recommend a dental check up at least once a year. Regular visits allow your dentist to check the soft parts of your mouth, including the tongue and cheeks. These examinations are important so the dentist can spot any infections, mouth conditions or even mouth cancer at the earliest stages. Full-denture wearers should check with their dentist about how often they should visit.

With regular professional care, a positive attitude and persistence, you can become one of the millions of people who wear their dentures with a smile.

Are dentures my only option?

No. Implants are another option to consider. Ask your dentist for more information, or see our 'Tell me about' leaflet [Implants](#).