

Ask The Dentists

Dear Dr. Winter, I have just been told I have 5 crowns with cavities under them. Two of these are part of bridges that are only 1 year old. I floss diligently and brush twice a day. What could cause cavities around bridges and crowns in such a short time.

Dear Ann, without seeing x-rays and doing an exam, I can only tell you that the reasons for decay are as follows:

1. Decay was left inside the tooth when the crowns were placed.
2. The crowns did not fit properly.
3. You are missing areas with your floss and you may have a high sugar diet.
4. A microscopic dental lab wasn't used which resulted in cement leaching out and leaving a gap between the tooth and crown that became more easily decayed.

Let's examine these one by one. Decay left in a tooth. When the crown was done, the filling under the crown may have been old and in need of replacement. If this decay was not found and removed meticulously, this decay is like a time bomb that will continue to eat away tooth structure even with a newly cemented crown. The solution to this is to make sure the dentist used magnifying glasses and caries stain detectors to insure there is no decay left inside the tooth. Then a new filling or core should be done prior to preparing the tooth for a new crown. It is essential that a crown sit on clean, healthy tooth structure.

Next, the crowns did not fit properly. The type of lab a dentist selects and their attention to detail will determine how tight the crown fits on the tooth. The dentist usually selects dental labs based upon how much the patient's insurance pays to make the crown. If insurance reimbursement is low, the dentist will select a less expensive lab. Conversely, if a patient has high esthetic demands, the dentist may use a master ceramist to insure the crowns will look better, fit better and last longer.

Today many crowns are sent overseas to receive big discounts. Your dentist should be able to show you a "made in the USA" verification if they have chosen a laboratory in the United States that uses microscopes for crown fabrication.

The next reason a crown may fail may be from poor oral hygiene habits and a high sugar diet. The sipping of sugar sodas, fruit juices, sports drinks and the inability to remove this sugar with proper brushing and flossing can result in cavities in



Drs. Richard and Bruce Winter

a short time. We recommend water and milk and coconut water as great low sugar drinks! Have your hygienist watch you brush and floss to assess your techniques!

Lastly, gaps under your crowns will allow cement to leach out. While there will always be a micro-gap between a crown and remaining tooth, the larger the gap, the more the cement can leak out by being exposed to foods and salivary acids. Ask your dentist if they are using microscopic dental labs.

Do your research! If you have crowns that fail, have your other crowns assessed to make sure they are serviceable before any further destruction can occur.

We invite our readers to schedule their comprehensive x-ray and examination visit. We can discuss implants, crowns, and cosmetic concerns while assuring you that we use the very best materials and labs. Please call us at 414-464- 9021 to schedule your visit today!

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Yours for better dentistry,

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