

Problem Solvers 7

Main term: Missing Teeth

Synonyms: Tooth loss, broken teeth, snaggle tooth, edentulous, gaps in smile

Meta Description: I have a missing tooth, what should I replace it with? What are my options? If I have multiple missing teeth are the options the same? The loss of teeth requires knowledge of why they were lost to help best decide the proper replacement options.

Article Headline: Tooth loss from trauma, a fracture or a cavity can help us decide the best options for tooth replacement.

Article DEK: If a proper diagnosis is made and the bone and surrounding tooth health is good, the options for tooth replacement will usually be a bridge or a dental implant. If surrounding gums are bad and bone loss has occurred, surrounding teeth cannot be used to help anchor replacement teeth with a partial denture or a bridge.

Body Copy:

When patients are told a tooth must be removed they often have a lot of questions to help them decide what they should do next.

Should I have a partial denture? Well, if multiple teeth are missing and budgets are limited, then a removable partial denture can replace teeth, and act to prevent tooth movement that would make permanent replacement in the future problematic.

A partial denture has metal clips and denture teeth and needs to be removed from the mouth for 6-8 hours a day to prevent yeast infections. Some partials are all plastic and sit only on the gums and may also be an option.

Will a partial denture hurt my teeth? Yes over time the clasps that engage the teeth will exert pressure on the teeth that will make them flex and predispose them to fracture. As well the movement under a partial during chewing will lead to friction and bone loss under the partial denture plastic saddles. Studies have shown that 60% of people with partial dentures are not wearing them 4 years after they are made.

What about using a bridge to replace a missing tooth? Bridges are tooth replacements that require reducing tooth structure on both sides of the space and making an all porcelain (zirconia) or porcelain fused to metal bridge that will hold on the teeth on each side of the space.

Are bridges permanent? Yes they cannot be removed. The advantage of a bridge is

that they are beautiful and long lasting. The downside is that by reducing tooth structure on the adjacent teeth, you are performing an irreversible procedure on these teeth. This tooth reduction can lead to sensitivity; root canal therapy to remove inflamed nerves, and means that for the rest of your life these teeth must be covered with crowns.

How long does a bridge last? Typically an insurance company will pay to replace a bridge every 5 years. On average a bridge should last 7-10 years or longer if cared for properly.

What would make a bridge fail? If people don't floss under a bridge daily, they can develop periodontal disease or cavities which can lead to the bridge failing. How do I prevent failure of a bridge? Using a water pick, dental floss, fluoride gels can all help to clean, protect and maintain a bridge. It is also crucial to have the dentist check the bite or occlusion on the bridge to make sure it isn't hitting harder than the adjacent teeth or causing premature wear on the opposing teeth.

Are all the bridges the same? No bridges can be made from various laboratories. In some cases bridges are made at large labs and others have them made at boutique dental labs, which can be quite a bit more expensive. While bridges are generally all going to fit, the level of beauty and the overall fit can be influenced by the quality of the lab and the price paid to fabricate them. You often get what you pay for.

The last way to replace a missing tooth is a dental implant. This is a screw type device made out of titanium alloy, which is placed into the space where the tooth was lost. Dental implants can have success rates from 88-95%.

The advantage of an implant is that you don't have to shave down adjacent teeth. The teeth are not connected so regular flossing can take place just like when your original tooth was present. The disadvantage of an implant is that a surgical procedure (which is usually painless) needs to be performed.

Dental implants are allowed to heal, then a chimney or abutment is screwed into the implant and a crown is fabricated to screw or cement into the implant.