

Dental Factsheets

Crowns

Dental crowns are 'covers' that protect damaged, cracked or broken teeth. They strengthen your existing, damaged tooth so you continue to use it effectively and without any discomfort. They are also commonly known as caps (because a crown sits over your existing tooth, covering the entire outer surface).



Why you might need a Crown

- If your tooth is suffering from significant decay and there is not enough tooth structure remaining to support a filling or an inlay and maintain functionality
- If a large portion of your tooth has fractured and it cannot be built up using traditional techniques
- If you have had a dental implant to replace a missing tooth, a crown will be fitted to the titanium implant
- Following root canal treatment, a crown is often needed to strengthen the tooth
- If you grind your teeth and have a poor diet, acid erosion may reduce your teeth to a point where the only option available is to use a crown
- For cosmetic reasons, to improve the aesthetics of your smile, you may opt for all porcelain cosmetic crowns

What are Crowns made from?

Some crowns are made from full gold, where as others are made from an alloy of metals fused to a porcelain outer shell. After time, crowns that are made from a combination of metal fused to porcelain can begin to show dark gum lines that are not aesthetically attractive.

All-porcelain or All-ceramic crowns are the best choice for a natural cosmetic look.

How long do crowns last?

It depends largely on how well you look after your teeth. Dental crowns require the same level of care and attention as your natural teeth. Provided you have a good oral hygiene program, attend regular checkups at your dentist, don't grind your teeth and maintain a tooth-kind diet, a high-quality dental crown can last 10-15 years. Many will last a lifetime.

Bridges

Dental bridges are used to replace one or more missing teeth, by attaching a false tooth to crowns mounted on the teeth on either one or both sides of the space.

When are dental bridges needed?

They are usually used when there are one or more teeth missing that affect:

- Your smile and appearance
- Your bite, as a result of adjacent teeth leaning into the space and altering the way the upper and lower teeth bite together
- Your speech
- The shape of your face

There are two types of dental bridges commonly used:

Traditional fixed bridge

The most commonly used type of bridge and consists of a false tooth fused between two porcelain crowns that are anchored on neighbouring teeth or implants. It is usually made of either porcelain fused to metal or ceramics. These are fixed and cannot be removed.



Adhesive bridges

Chosen when the gap to be filled is in between the front teeth, or when the teeth on either side of the missing tooth are strong and healthy without large fillings. The false tooth is made of porcelain and is fused to metal bands that are bonded to the adjacent teeth using resin that is hidden from view.

What are bridges made of?

Bridges may be made of

- Porcelain
- Porcelain bonded to precious metal
- All-metal dental bridges (gold)

How long will dental bridges last?

Dental bridges can last 10-15 years, provided that you maintain good dental hygiene and eating habits. Many will last a lifetime if looked after properly.

Inlays and Onlays

Tooth coloured inlays and onlays can be used to replace your existing mercury amalgam fillings or to restore badly worn teeth. They can be made in a mercury free material which is very strong, long lasting and can accurately match the colour of your own teeth.



Each filling is crafted under near ideal conditions outside the mouth by a highly skilled laboratory technician, making the result more detailed, hard wearing and easier to keep clean than a filling made in your mouth.

Though these inlays are not as strong as conventional gold inlays, they can last many years.



Keeping you smiling

If you feel self-conscious smiling broadly or laughing out loud because you have dark, unattractive old fillings, then these inlays or onlays are an ideal alternative to conventional fillings.

Gold Inlays are ideal solutions when the strength of your bite is such that an even stronger, longer lasting solution is required - this particularly being the case on your very back teeth - though luckily these often do not show when you smile.