

Removable dentures



What are they?

A removable denture replaces missing teeth. 'Partial' dentures replace a few missing teeth and 'full' or 'complete' dentures are needed if all the natural teeth are missing.

Complete dentures are made of acrylic (plastic). Partial dentures can also be made wholly of acrylic. Alternatively, they may consist of acrylic teeth on a light metal alloy base: this type of partial denture is more secure, stronger and less bulky, but also more expensive.

What will my dentist do?

- The dentist uses a putty-like material to make moulds of your mouth - called 'impressions'. A dental technician uses them to make models for the denture to be built on. Second impressions may be taken to provide a more accurate fit.
- The technician makes wax blocks which fit the models. The dentist puts these in your mouth to record the position of your jaws in relation to each other. The dentist then trims and seals the wax blocks to show the technician how your teeth should bite together, and the shape to make the denture.
- A trial denture is made and put in your mouth. The dentist will ask you how it fits, feels and looks before making any final changes.

- The trial denture then goes back to the technician who permanently fixes the teeth. The next visit consists of placing the finished denture in your mouth, adjusting the final fit and providing instructions on how to look after your dentures.
- The denture is then ready to use. The dentist will want to see you again fairly soon to see how you are getting on with the denture. If there are problems, they can make small adjustments.
- It is usual (unless you are exempt from charges) that the dentist will expect payment for the denture before placing in your mouth.

What are the benefits?

- If you have lost some teeth, dentures can improve the way you look, bite, chew and speak.
- They are custom-made to match your mouth and can be made to look as natural as possible.
- The teeth that are left are protected from wear and tear. Without dentures, the natural teeth may move or tilt, stopping your teeth biting together properly.
- Dentures can be fitted immediately after front teeth have been taken out so that nobody will know that you have had a tooth out. These are called 'immediate' dentures. Immediate dentures will gradually lose their fit over six to 12 months and the dentist will need to see you during this time. Further visits will involve possible relining of the denture to improve the fit. After six to 12 months, the healing process will have settled down and new dentures will be made. Both relining and new dentures may lead to extra costs.

Dentures will never feel like your own teeth and it can take time to get used to them. If you haven't had a denture before, the dentist will want to explain the difficulties of wearing dentures, as well as the benefits and how you should look after your new dentures and the teeth you have left. Good oral hygiene is important to maintain the teeth supporting your dentures.