

TOP 3 BEST WAYS TO REPLACE MISSING TEETH





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LEARN YOUR OPTIONS AND MAKE
THE BEST DECISION

If you have suffered tooth loss, whether you've lost one tooth or several, replacing your missing tooth or teeth as soon as possible is very important for a number of reasons.



Of course, the most obvious reason is the unsightly gaps that missing teeth leave in your smile, but there are many other consequences of delaying your dental work that you may not be aware of.

Your teeth do more than just create a great smile and help you bite and chew. They work together with your tongue to shape the many distinct sounds that are part of everyday speech.

Each tooth works to help maintain its own little area of the jawbone, the stress that their roots place on the jaw as you bite or chew stimulating production of new bone cells to maintain jawbone size, strength and density.

Each tooth also plays a role in supporting surrounding muscles and tissues and in stabilizing adjacent teeth, helping them maintain proper positioning and alignment.

That means that the gap left by a missing tooth can interfere with speech clarity and make biting and/or chewing more difficult. Remaining teeth will typically begin to shift towards the gap, promoting tooth wear and decay and creating abnormal spaces between teeth. Bone loss will occur where tooth roots are missing, which undermines support for adjacent teeth, weakens the jawbone and degrades support for facial features, which can lead to premature facial aging. Replacing missing teeth quickly can minimize your risk of these problems, preserving your dental health and appearance.

However, while getting your tooth or teeth replaced quickly is very important, so too is choosing the best possible option for doing so. That means spending a little time learning about those options, including the advantages and disadvantages of each according to your particular circumstances and treatment goals. To help you get started, we'll go over the top 3 best ways to replace missing teeth, delving into the details of each option to ensure that you have the information you need to make solid, well-informed decisions about your care.

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FIXED DENTAL BRIDGES

These are dental appliances that are designed to fill the gap left by one to three missing teeth. The most common type will feature two dental crowns, one positioned at each end of the bridge, between which are placed artificial teeth – called pontics – to replace your missing ones. The crowns will be fitted onto natural teeth on either side of the gap you need to fill in order to provide secure support for the artificial teeth. While dental bridges can be made from a variety of materials, porcelain or porcelain fused to metal are most common, since they create an appliance that closely resembles natural teeth.

Placing a fixed dental bridge is a process that generally requires at least two dental visits. During the first visit, your dentist will prepare the natural teeth that will support the bridge for crowning, which involves resizing and reshaping these teeth so that the crowns will fit over them properly. Then, impressions will be taken of the area, which will be used to fabricate your bridge. In most cases, you will be provided with a temporary bridge to protect your altered natural teeth and exposed gums while you wait for your permanent bridge to be made. Once your permanent bridge is ready, you will see your dentist again to have it placed. During this visit, your temporary bridge will be removed and the permanent one adjusted for proper fit and function as necessary. Then, the crowns will be bonded or cemented firmly in place, completing your dental restoration.

• ADVANTAGES

Perhaps the chief advantage of dental bridges is that they offer a fairly quick and economical means of replacing missing teeth, and a well-made and properly fitted bridge can offer a very natural-looking dental restoration. Additionally, bridge placement can improve some of the problems related to tooth loss, such as poor biting and chewing efficiency or speech issues, and will work to prevent other teeth from drifting.



• DISADVANTAGES

Disadvantages of bridge use include the fact that they offer no protection against bone loss, allowing the jawbone to shrink away beneath them. This issue contributes to another important disadvantage, the need to replace dental bridges regularly – generally every 5 to 7 years – as changes in the gum ridge beneath them alters their fit, causing instability. Another important disadvantage of these appliances is the necessity to alter healthy natural teeth to place them, which can make those teeth more prone to decay. Additionally, the stress of supporting a bridge can damage those teeth over time, causing undue wear, cracking or loosening, and supporting teeth are often damaged in cases of bridge failure. Lastly, bridges can be difficult to keep clean, requiring special tools to clean the area beneath them.





PARTIAL DENTURES

Partial dentures are a removable dental appliance designed to close the gap created by missing teeth. They typically consist of an acrylic base, colored to match the gums, onto which artificial teeth are fixed. In some cases, the acrylic base covers a metal framework, and most partial dentures have clasps, often made of metal, that grasp surrounding natural teeth to keep the denture in place.

Replacing your missing teeth with a partial denture is a process that generally requires 5 to 7 dental visits, spread over a month or more. That process will involve taking impressions of your mouth to fit the denture base, selecting your artificial teeth, trying in of the results, and the final fabrication of your denture. Once it is ready, your dentist will check your partial denture for proper fit and comfort and make any necessary adjustments before sending you on your way with your new teeth. Over the next few days or weeks, further adjustments are often required to maintain a comfortable and secure fit, and annual exams will be necessary to check the fit of your dentures, as well as the condition of your gums and adjacent natural teeth.



- ## ADVANTAGES

Partial dentures are typically the most economical way to replace missing teeth, their costs generally substantially lower than other restorative options. They are easier to clean than dental bridges, and offer a fairly quick solution to aesthetic issues caused by tooth loss. They can improve functional issues as well, making eating easier and speech clearer. Lastly, being fitted with a partial denture will protect against drift of your remaining natural teeth.

- ## DISADVANTAGES

Partial dentures do not protect against bone loss. As the jawbone shrinks, so too does the gum ridge, which provides the primary support for denture stability. Pressure on the gum ridge from the denture itself can accelerate that process. For that reason, partial dentures generally need to be refitted or replaced every 3 to 5 years. Denture clasps can damage the natural teeth they grip for support, making them more prone to decay. Partial dentures are removed for cleaning and at night, which can be uncomfortable or embarrassing for some, and the need for specialized cleansing solutions and tools can be expensive and inconvenient.



DENTAL IMPLANTS

Dental implants are another very popular option for the replacement of a single missing tooth or several of them. Implant-based restorations are distinctly different from bridges and partial dentures in that they replace not just the crown of a missing tooth, but the tooth root as well.

For single tooth replacement, this option consists of a dental implant, which is a tiny titanium screw that is surgically placed into the jawbone to form an artificial tooth root, an abutment, which is a small post that attaches to the implant, and a prosthetic tooth that is mounted onto the abutment. To replace two or three missing teeth, two or more implants may be used to secure a permanent bridge.

Dental implant restoration is typically done in a process that takes several steps. The first step is a consultation appointment with your oral surgeon. During this appointment, you can expect your mouth to be thoroughly examined, medical imaging to be done and a complete health history to be taken. The information gathered via these steps will be used by your oral surgeon to determine whether you are a good candidate for dental implants, and if so, to present you with your best treatment options. Once you and your oral surgeon have



agreed on a treatment plan, your implant placement procedure will be scheduled.

During a standard implant placement procedure, the oral surgeon will make a small incision in the gum tissue to expose the bone underneath, drill a small hole in that bone, insert the implant, then suture the incision, closing the gum tissue over the newly placed implant. The dental implant will then be left undisturbed for a healing period of between 3 and 6 months, which gives it time to bond with the bone – a process called osseointegration. Once the dental implant is securely anchored in the jawbone, another minor procedure will be done to uncover the implant and attach the abutment. Once the gum tissue has healed around the abutment, the final step can be done, which is the fabrication and placement of the artificial tooth or teeth. In some cases, implant placement can be done in a single-stage procedure, eliminating the need for second surgery to uncover the implants.

- ## ADVANTAGES

Dental implants hold a number of advantages over dental bridges and partial dentures. Since they replace the tooth root, they offer protection against bone loss, the implants stimulating bone growth and repair in much the same way that natural teeth do, keeping the jawbone strong and healthy and the shape and structure of the face intact. Since their structure closely mimics that of natural teeth – a root, firmly anchored in the jawbone to support a crown – they look and feel like healthy natural teeth, and function like them as well, offering more efficient biting and chewing function than dentures and bridges.

Additionally, implants are self-supporting, so adjacent natural teeth are not altered during dental restoration. Additionally, dental implants are

a much more permanent solution to tooth loss than partial dentures or bridges, with the average dental implant having a lifespan of 25 years. Last, but not least, dental implants are easy to maintain, needing just regular brushing, flossing and professional dental cleanings – rather like natural teeth.

• DISADVANTAGES

Disadvantages of dental implants include a longer dental restoration process than bridges or partial dentures, which requires more dental care visits. Some find the need for surgery a disadvantage. For some patients, preparatory procedures, such as bone augmentation or sinus lifts may be required for proper implant placement, and for a small percentage of others, factors like health conditions or poor bone quantity and/or quality may make implant placement impossible. While they are often the most cost-effective option over the long-term, the initial costs of dental implant restoration can be much higher than those of other teeth replacement options.

So there you have it, the general information on the top 3 teeth replacement options that you need to know in order to weigh those options carefully. Of course, the final decision on which is best for you should be made with the input of your dental health care team, who will be familiar with your personal circumstances and your treatment goals. Chances are that they will recommend dental implants as your best option, given their many advantages in terms of both short and long-term oral health and function, as well as their exceptional longevity and aesthetic results. However, if dental implants are not for you, well-made dental bridges or partial dentures, constructed of quality materials, can be great alternatives, offering attractive and functional dental restorations.



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