



Denture Care Information That Fits Your Life

A patient's guide to understanding
proper denture care



Academy
of General Dentistry™

From the office of:

Nahid D. Andrews, DMD
3332 Portage Ave
South Bend, IN 46628-3656
(574) 273-3900

DENTURES: A REASON TO SMILE

Replacing missing teeth can radically improve a person's smile and quality of life. Whether you're in your 20s, 50s, or 80s, dentures can help improve the way you look, feel, eat, and speak and help boost your confidence.

What is a denture?

A denture is a custom-made removable replacement for missing teeth and adjacent tissues. It is made of acrylic resin, sometimes in combination with various metals or porcelain. A denture closely resembles natural gum tissue and teeth.

A full or complete denture replaces all of the teeth, while a partial denture fills in the spaces created by missing teeth and prevents other teeth from changing position.

What causes tooth loss?

Patients can become entirely edentulous (without teeth) due to many reasons, the most prevalent being removal because of dental disease (i.e., periodontal disease and tooth decay). Other reasons include tooth developmental defects caused by severe malnutrition, genetic defects, trauma, or drug use.

Because teeth are a permanent part of the body, tooth loss can be an emotional topic. It is important to talk to your dentist about any fears, anxiety, or other emotions you are feeling about tooth loss.



WHO NEEDS A DENTURE?

Both younger and older patients can be fitted for dentures. Candidates for complete dentures have lost most or all of their teeth. A partial denture is suitable for those who have some natural teeth remaining. Dentures can help patients in a number of ways, including:

- Chewing function—chewing ability is improved by replacing toothless areas with dentures.
- Personal appearance—the presence of teeth provides a natural facial appearance. Wearing a denture to replace missing teeth provides support for the lips and cheeks, correcting the collapsed appearance that occurs after losing teeth.
- Phonetics—replacing missing teeth helps improve pronunciation of syllables and vowels.
- Self-esteem—you will feel better about yourself.



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU GET A DENTURE?

A dentist can make a full conventional denture when all of the teeth have been lost or all extraction sites have healed (up to eight weeks or longer). There are instances when dentures are made to be placed immediately when teeth are removed. The denture process takes about one month and at least five appointments:



Appointment No. 1: The initial diagnosis and initial impressions are made.



Appointment No. 2: A more detailed impression is made to better record all borders of the denture.



Appointment No. 3: A wax-bite registration is made to determine the proper jaw position. The color and shape of the teeth also are selected at this appointment.

Appointment No. 4: A "try-in" is done to assure proper color, shape, and fit. If necessary, minor adjustments can be made during this appointment.



Appointment No. 5: The patient's final denture is adjusted and delivered to the patient.

Follow-up appointments usually are necessary for further adjustments to ensure a patient's comfort.

Getting Used to Your Denture



New denture wearers need time to get accustomed to their new teeth. Even the best-fitting dentures will feel awkward and loose at first because the cheek and gums must learn to keep them in place. While most denture wearers can begin to speak normally within a few hours, many report discomfort with eating for several days to a few weeks after the denture is first placed. To get



accustomed to chewing with a denture, start with soft, easy-to-chew foods. In addition, denture wearers often notice a slight change in facial appearance, increased salivary flow, or minor irritation or discomfort.



PROPER DENTURE CARE



It's possible to get bacteria or fungus growing on the denture or gums. Dentures sit on gum tissue, making it extremely important for patients with dentures to have excellent oral hygiene habits.

Here are tips to ensure that your denture and your mouth both stay clean and healthy:

- A denture is fragile, so it is important to handle it with care.
- Denture adhesives may be recommended, especially for the first-time denture wearer. Stability will help your confidence.
- Take your dentures out every evening—your gums need time to rest.
- Keep the denture clean by soaking and brushing it daily with a non-abrasive denture cleanser and brush (the brush should be specifically designed for cleaning dentures or a soft toothbrush).
- Do not use toothpaste on the denture, because it can scratch the surface, leaving the denture susceptible to plaque and stains.
- Soak the denture in a proper denture cleanser or water nightly.
- Avoid using boiling water to sterilize the denture. Hot water can cause the denture to lose its shape and become warped.
- If you wear a partial denture, remove it before brushing your natural teeth.
- Brush and floss your natural teeth twice a day. Oral hygiene is still very important!
- Even if teeth are missing, brush the gums to stimulate them.
- To avoid misplacing your denture, store it in the same place after removal.
- Visit your dentist regularly.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Should a denture be worn at night?

A: It's considered best to remove your denture at night and soak it in a cleansing solution or water. Removing the denture for at least eight hours during either the day or night allows the gum tissue to rest and allows normal stimulation and cleansing of the mouth by the tongue and saliva. This promotes better long-term health of the gums.

Q: Should I continue to see my dentist, even if I no longer have teeth?

A: It is important to continue having regular dental checkups so your dentist can examine oral tissues for signs of disease or cancer. With age, your mouth will continue to change as the bone under your denture shrinks or recedes. To maintain a proper fit over time, it may be necessary to adjust your denture, reline your denture, or possibly remake your denture. Never attempt to adjust a denture yourself, and do not use denture adhesives as a substitute for well-fitting dentures or relining your dentures. When in doubt, consult your dentist.

Q: My denture no longer feels comfortable. What should I do?

A: Talk to your dentist if you notice any difference in the fit of your denture, as your gum tissues and bone can change over time. A denture that was a perfect fit years ago may fit improperly today. See your dentist regularly to make sure he or she is aware of your concerns. Never attempt to adjust a denture yourself. Your dentist can make adjustments to ensure that your denture fits well and your smile stays radiant.



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of General Dentistry™

211 E. Chicago Avenue, Suite 900
Chicago, IL 60611
877.2X.A.YEAR (877.292.9327)
www.agd.org

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