

Removable Partial Dentures

As the name implies, this method requires the creation of removable teeth to replace those which are missing. Needless to say, such teeth need to be connected to a foundation that will give them the ability to stay in the mouth while still being able to be removed when required.



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For this reason, the replacement teeth are attached to either an acrylic “baseplate” or a chrome frame. Both of these structures are custom-made on plaster casts of your jaws to precisely fit the contours of your mouth.



Not only are the teeth carried by the baseplate or chrome frame but also the “clasps” or retainers which keep the denture in place.

Clasps are carefully designed to grip selected natural teeth in your jaws to stabilise the denture and resist dislodging forces while chewing. They are usually made of stainless steel wire or cast chrome-cobalt.

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The former can be adjusted easily by your dentist to fit tightly without fear of breakage. However, even the most minimal bending of a cast chrome clasp could result in fracture! So avoid the temptation to adjust them yourself unless you are prepared to pay for a completely new chrome partial denture if you lose a clasp or two!



Whether you choose an acrylic partial denture or a chrome, please be aware that both types are very unnatural, as they sit ON the gums and not IN the gums like natural teeth. They cover much of the palate or the gums on the inner surfaces of your lower teeth, and with time, may allow for further damage due to the increased surface area that harbours plaque and bacteria.

Clinical experience has shown that in the lower jaw partial dentures are not tolerated well unless a front tooth is involved! They often cause

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annoyance to the tongue, especially if made of thick acrylic which is necessary to maximise strength and avoid fracture of the baseplate. Most dentists have found that if these dentures are required only for the replacement of back teeth to improve the ability to chew, they usually end up in the patient's drawer rather than in their mouths! The fact that they sit ON the gums, often overlying sharp bony ridges, means that they are potentially quite uncomfortable when direct pressure is exerted during chewing. Accordingly, we often find that patients really dislike wearing such dentures!

One other frustration that is part of wearing partial dentures is the need for removal and cleaning after every meal. Needless to say, thorough brushing and flossing of your natural teeth is essential if you want to avoid additional cavities and gum disease. For these reasons, it is best to leave them out at night and place them in a glass of water. It is understandable that if the denture replaces front teeth, it may be a cause of embarrassment, especially if your partner is unaware of your "little secret". However, in the interests of your long-term dental health, please do not leave your dentures in your mouth for any longer than absolutely necessary.

Here is a unique story as related by one of my patients which highlights why removable dentures are not as ideal an option for missing teeth!

A little while back, this gentleman was staying at a London hotel and was forced to evacuate his room in the middle of the night due to an intense fire that had broken out on his floor. Unfortunately, the clothes he had in his room were destroyed as was his partial denture which, as a result of the panic, he had left behind in a glass of water in the bathroom! Although the insurance company provided clothing for his trip back to Sydney, there

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was no time to to replace his partial denture, resulting in having to travel back to Australia without any front teeth! Needless to say, we placed an urgent request to our technical laboratory when we ordered his new replacement denture!

He has since had those missing teeth replaced with non-removable implanted teeth so in case of a similar incident happening in the future, his teeth will accompany him on the plane all the way back home!



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