



Bridge Information

1. What is a bridge?

A bridge is made up of a number of porcelain teeth (crowns) joined, to bridge a gap caused by a missing tooth or teeth. The tooth shaped crowns are made in the laboratory to cover a tooth or teeth on either side of the gap. Your bridge can be made of porcelain fused to metal (PFM) or all-ceramic/full porcelain material. Your dentist will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each type of bridge, depending on your case. Dental bridges are supported by natural teeth or implants.

2. Why do I need a bridge?

A bridge is a fixed option to replace a missing tooth or teeth. It is not always necessary to replace missing teeth, but you may wish to replace missing teeth to restore your chewing ability or for aesthetic reasons.

3. What steps are involved?

Preparing for a bridge usually takes two appointments. The first appointment involves examining, preparing the teeth and taking impressions for the dental laboratory; a temporary bridge will be placed until your next visit. The second appointment involves removing the temporary bridge and placement of the permanent bridge.

4. What are the risk and complications of a bridge?

- **Discomfort or sensitivity:** If the nerve within the tooth is alive at the time of treatment, there is a risk that this nerve may be damaged by preparing the tooth. Your dentist may recommend that you brush teeth with toothpaste designed for sensitive teeth. Pain or sensitivity that occurs when you bite down usually means that the bridge is too high on the tooth. If this is the case, call your dentist as this issue can be easily fixed. Severe pain that is lasting can suggest the nerve inside the tooth is dying. This may mean you will need root canal treatment at a later stage. This could also involve replacing the existing bridge.
- **Chipped bridge:** if the chip is small, some white composite filling material can be used to repair the chip. If the chip is too extensive to be fixed with white composite filling material, the bridge may need to be replaced.
- **Loose bridge:** sometimes the cement holding the bridge washes out from underneath. This causes the bridge to become loose and it also allows bacteria to get in under the bridge which can cause decay. If you feel your bridge has become loose, please contact the dental clinic.
- **Bridge falls off:** a bridge can fall off for different reasons including decaying of the tooth under the bridge and loosening of the cement holding the bridge in place. If your bridge falls off keep it safe and ring you the dental clinic and they will advise on how to care for the tooth and bridge until you can be seen by a dentist. The dentist may be able to recement the bridge, if not a new bridge will need to be made.

- **Bleeding and bruising:** if you take any drugs to thin your blood, you are more likely to get a bruise as the medication affects the way the body clots your blood.
- **Allergic reaction:** a reaction can occur with the metals or cements used but this is very a rare occurrence.
- **Dark line on bridge teeth next to the gum line:** a dark line next to the gum line of your bridged teeth is normal, particularly if you have a porcelain-fused-to-metal bridge. This dark line is simply the metal of the bridge showing through. While not a problem in itself, the dark line may be cosmetically unacceptable, and your dentist may have to replace the bridge with a full porcelain or ceramic bridge.

5. Does a bridge require special care?

A bridge does not require any special care; the bridged tooth or teeth should be treated like any other teeth. Good oral hygiene practices should be followed, including brushing twice daily and daily flossing. There is a special floss for cleaning underneath your bridge. Flossing around the bridge area where the gum meets the bridge is important to prevent decay and gum disease. If decay goes undetected for a period of time, the tooth or teeth may need root canal treatment and a new bridge, or in some cases it might need to be extracted. It is essential that your oral hygiene is maintained.

NB If you have any questions or concerns please talk to your dentist prior to your treatment.