



Crown information

1. What is a dental crown?

A dental crown is a tooth shaped 'cap' that is made in a dental laboratory to cover a tooth to protect and restore its shape, size, strength and improve its appearance.

A crown can be made entirely of metal (gold or silver), porcelain fused to metal (PFM) or all ceramic. Your dentist will recommend the best type of crown for your individual case. On average, crowns can last anywhere from between 5 and 15 years. The life span of a crown depends on the amount of wear and tear the crown is exposed to, how well you look after the crown and any mouth related habits such as nail biting.

2. Why do I need a crown?

You may need a dental crown for several reasons. The tooth is usually badly broken down or damaged by decay. As a result a simple filling will not be strong enough. A crown covers the damaged tooth and protects the remaining tooth structure.

Crowns are also used to hold a dental bridge in place, to cover a dental implant or to make a cosmetic modification to misshaped and discolored teeth.

3. What steps are involved?

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

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

- **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 also recommend that you brush your teeth with toothpaste designed for sensitive teeth. Pain or sensitivity that occurs when you bite down usually means that the crown is too high on the tooth. If this is the case, call your dentist. This issue can be easily fixed with some adjusting.
Severe pain may indicate that the nerve inside the tooth might be dying. This might mean you will need root canal treatment at a later stage. This may also involve replacing the existing crown.
- **Chipped crown:** 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 crown may need to be replaced.

- **Loose crown:** sometimes the cement holding the crown washes out from underneath. This causes the crown to become loose and it also allows bacteria to get in under the crown which can cause decay. If you feel your crown has become loose, please contact the dental clinic so it can be checked and recemented.
- **Crown falls off:** a crown can fall off for different reasons including decaying of the tooth under the crown and loosening of the cement holding the crown in place. If your crown falls off, keep it safe and ring your dental clinic and they will advise on how to care for the tooth and crown until you can be seen by a dentist. The dentist may be able to recement the crown, if not a new crown 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 rare.
- **Dark line on crowned tooth next to the gum line.** a dark line next to the gum line of your crowned tooth is normal, particularly if you have a porcelain-fused-to-metal crown. This dark line is simply the metal of the crown showing through. While not a problem itself, the dark line may be cosmetically unacceptable, and your dentist may have to replace the crown with a full porcelain crown.

5. Does a crown require special care?

A crowned tooth does not require any special care; the crowned tooth should be treated like any other tooth. Good oral hygiene practices should be followed, including brushing twice daily and daily flossing. Flossing around the crown area where the gum meets the crown is important to prevent decay and gum disease. If decay goes undetected for a period of time, the tooth may require root canal treatment and a new crown, 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.