

10. Mouth odour - Organic debris tends to build up on the plastic plate and this does not smell fresh. You need to scrub your plate with a mild abrasive and a stiff bristled brush. You can use toothpaste or smokers' toothpaste if the stains are more resistant. We recommend you purchase a special denture brush from the pharmacy as it is much more aggressive in its cleaning action than ordinary toothbrushes. Soaking your denture overnight is an option although most people find it socially unacceptable to be without their critical teeth. However, if you can do it, it is somewhat healthier for your gums to have a rest from the denture in the time you sleep.

11. Springiness of the bite - Because the false teeth rest partially on the gum, which is a soft compressible tissue, they tend to spring up and down relative to your natural teeth. This may give you some initial discomfort. Most people usually get used to this after a while.

SPECIAL NOTE TO DENTURE WEARERS WHO INTEND HAVING IMPLANTS:
After your implant has been placed into your jaw bone the gum will usually be stitched over the top of the implant or there will be a slight visible metal bulge from the healing cap on top of the implant. Either way, the fitting surface of your denture, which will sit over this, will need to be ground back in order to accommodate the increased bulk from the implant. This is critical so that the denture does not rub on the implant and cause it to move in the first few weeks of healing. Your denture will have to be severely ground back and then relined with a soft pink rubbery material. As a result there will be a reduction in the strength of your denture and occasionally a fracture may develop. If you hear a crack begin please call the surgery. In this event, we will have to thicken the other side of the plastic to compensate. Unfortunately, this will result in an increased feeling of bulkiness to your tongue and will cost a small additional amount.

This document has been produced for the international dental profession. The English (US) dictionary has been used as the basis for the text.



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What Are Partial Dentures?

Partial dentures are a low cost way of replacing a missing tooth or teeth. They are often done as a temporary measure while patients are waiting for an implant to integrate with the bone, or for economic reasons i.e. to reduce expense where a permanent tooth replacement is required. A partial denture replaces several teeth, whereas a full denture replaces all the teeth in an upper and/or lower jaw. They are made from either plastic (acrylic) or metal and plastic, or metal.

HOW DO PARTIAL DENTURES HOLD ON TO THE TEETH?

The partial denture has the replacement, false tooth/teeth adhered to it and some metal clips protrude from this. They are positioned to grip onto your existing teeth and this is what holds everything in place.

HOW WILL THE DENTURE FEEL?

The partial denture tends to be a frustrating and difficult part of modern dentistry. They are uncomfortable and difficult for some patients to accept. It is very hard to predict the way in which the patient will feel after they are given a new partial denture. Some patients take to them readily; others detest them because they feel like a foreign object in their mouth. Hopefully, you only have to endure your partial denture for six months while waiting for your implants. If your partial is of the chrome-cobalt type (metal), it should be a lot more comfortable, accurate and less bulky than a plastic (acrylic) one. You may find that your partial is sufficiently comfortable for you as a long term solution to replacing missing teeth.

WHAT PROBLEMS ARE ENCOUNTERED WITH PARTIAL DENTURES?

1. The gum and bone underneath the denture changes with time -

This leads to an uneven foundation developing as time goes by and it is particularly noticeable in the first 3-6 months after the extraction of the tooth or teeth. As the top of the ridge resorbs more than the side of the ridge or the palate, biting pressures lead to stresses in the plate which may (in plastic dentures) result in the plate or the base developing a hairline crack and eventually cracking in half. It is not the dentists or technicians fault if your partial denture cracks in half or develops a crack. You can reduce the risk of your plate cracking in half (but not eliminate it) by having periodic relines. This relining recharges and tops up the underside of the plate with new plastic to conform to the new shape of the jaw bone.

2. Retention - It is difficult to get the dentures to stay in adequately without providing unsightly metal clips holding on to several teeth. Often these teeth and clips are in the area exposed when you smile. There is an alternative whereby the unaesthetic metal clips can be limited to the back teeth and special invisible clips can be made on the inside of your teeth – but this requires crowns or the addition of temporary or permanent filling material to the sides of your premolars, and obviously involves additional expense.

3. Matching tooth colour - Denture teeth only come in a certain number of colours whereas natural teeth come in an infinite number of colours. It is distinctly possible that your denture teeth will not match your surrounding teeth perfectly and you may have to accept a degree of mismatch.

4. Reduced sense of taste - Because most top plates cover most of the palate the sense of taste is adversely affected.

5. Interference with the bite - Where the wire clips cross from the inside of the mouth over the top of the teeth to engage the outside of the tooth, there is potential for interference to the normal tooth meshing pattern. You cannot simply grind away the metal or your denture will fall out, so you may have to accept temporary discomfort or have a small amount of your tooth enamel removed.

6. Dentures become loose with time - The metal clips tend to lose their grasp on the tooth with time due to the metallurgy of the wire, thus allowing the denture to become loose and cause embarrassment. On the other hand, clips which are tightened too much cause pain in the teeth. You will need to have your clips tightened from time to time to overcome this problem.

7. Gum disease - Partial dentures are sometimes known colloquially in the profession as “gum strippers”. This is because as the patient chews on them, the plastic base and wire clips drive the gum down the side of the tooth. This does not always happen and depends on individual circumstances. Apart from the issue of gum stripping, partial dentures always increase the probability of gum disease due to the fact that they remove the natural flushing action of the saliva and the cleaning action of the tongue. They are very good at trapping plaque and food and therefore should be removed and cleaned after every meal or snack. Even with meticulous oral hygiene, patients who wear partial dentures for long periods of time tend to suffer more gum disease.

8. Effect on supporting teeth - The partial denture transmits the force of chewing not only to the gums but also to the remaining teeth. These teeth are often barely able to support themselves let alone double the work. As a result, partial dentures are well known to hasten the demise of remaining fragile teeth and turn solid teeth into loose ones.

9. Mouth feel and phonetics - Patients who have bulky plates covering the roof of their mouths often initially suffer from lisps and difficulty in pronouncing words such as “this” or “that”. This is because the tongue is programmed to meet the palate at a certain point in space and two mm of plastic causes an upset to the established patterns of speech. The plastic cannot simply be made thinner because it will reduce the strength and lead to more breakages. Hopefully, your tongue will retract after a few weeks and speech will become relatively normal. Many patients also complain of the bulky feeling in their mouth and you should be prepared for this. Many partial dentures are made, then worn for a week or two and never worn again as a result of this discomfort.

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