

bridgework



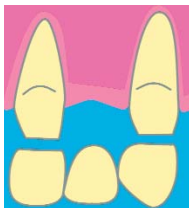
INFORMATION
FOR PATIENTS

To replace missing teeth

bridgework

What is a bridge?

A bridge is used to replace one or several missing teeth. It is usually constructed by fitting crowns (caps) to the teeth on either side of the gap, thereby bridging it.



What are bridges for?

A bridge not only replaces missing teeth, it also supports the adjacent teeth. If a gap is left, it can be unsightly and the teeth on either side can tip into it over time, causing problems with the bite and even gum disease. Whilst dentures can be used to replace missing teeth, bridges are usually a much better option since dentures can hasten the loss of the remaining natural teeth and you have to remove them at night.

When do I need a bridge?

A bridge may be recommended if:

You have lost one or more teeth at the front or back of the mouth and there are adjacent teeth to support a bridge

- You are having an implant and a bridge is needed between the implant and a tooth for stability



natural looking and strong

What materials are used for making a bridge?

Bridges are made from various materials depending on the clinical diagnosis and your preferences. Some of the currently available combinations include:

- Layers of porcelain bonded to precious metal: this is the most common construction and has been in use for many years. It can be used for large bridges
- Pure porcelain: this is used for bridges where appearance of primary importance. Porcelain is translucent which gives the bridge a more life-like appearance. Current techniques do not allow the construction of larger bridges with this material
- Porcelain on a new generation composites: these combinations offer the advantages of pure porcelain and allow the construction of larger metal-free bridges. For extensive bridgework, however, we still need to use porcelain bonded to precious metal
- Precious metal (including silver, gold and palladium): these are very strong, hard-wearing materials, most commonly used for bridgework at the back of the mouth where they cannot be seen. If you have a very hard bite it may be necessary to have a bridge with the back teeth made of gold and just the front ones with a porcelain covering

How does a dentist prepare teeth for a bridge?

The teeth next to the gap are prepared in the same way as for crowns; by removing some of the outer surface, leaving a strong inner base to support each crown. During this preparation a local anaesthetic is used, which is why the treatment is comfortable and feels little different from having a filling. The amount of tooth removed is only about 1.5mm. The dentist will then take an impression of these prepared teeth and of the opposite jaw to record the bite. You will be fitted with temporary crowns for a week or two until the bridge can be cemented.

confidence and function

How is a bridge made?

The impressions of your mouth are sent to a dental laboratory where a technician will make a plaster model. A bridge made from precious metal, porcelain or composite is then hand-crafted on the model to ensure a perfect fit. The colours, shape, translucency and fine details of your teeth are matched by building up porcelain in layers using a range of shades and opacities. For bridges made entirely of metal, this colour detail is not required. Bridges are fired in a furnace so that these personalised characteristics become permanent.

EXAMPLE



How many appointments do I need to have a bridge made?

It normally takes two appointments, although you may need more in complicated cases.

What is a post?

A post can be used to provide a stable foundation for a bridge in cases where a tooth has been root-filled. There are various types of post depending upon individual circumstances. Either prefabricated and fitted at the first appointment or made from a cast metal and fitted at the second visit. Your dentist will prescribe the most suitable type.

What is a core?

If a tooth is broken down, the dentist may be able to rebuild it using a filling material and crown what is called a 'core'. This is used to prepare a core bridge in the same way as a natural tooth.

Does a bridge look natural?

Yes; once a bridge is fitted it is difficult to distinguish it from natural teeth and it will usually improve your smile. The dentist will record the colour and translucency of the teeth next to the gap and the colour of the bridge is made to match. Modern porcelains can be incredibly beautiful, life-like and long-lasting.

How long does a bridge last?

A bridge can last many years provided it is properly looked after. Good dental hygiene is essential to prolong its life. You should brush and floss the bridge as normal, although you may need to use a special brush or floss to clean under it. The dentist or hygienist will show you the most effective home care techniques. Regular check-ups with the dentist and hygienist are essential to maintain the health of your teeth and gums.

What is a bonded bridge?

A bonded bridge, sometimes called a 'Maryland Bridge', is a new way to replace a missing tooth without crowning any other natural teeth. The replacement tooth is bonded to the surrounding teeth and is held in place by one or more 'wings' which go behind the neighbouring natural teeth. Unfortunately not all missing teeth can be restored with a bonded bridge.

What about implants?

More and more people are choosing implants. This is because implants avoid the necessity to crown healthy teeth. In a situation where your adjacent teeth are in good condition an implant may be the best option. Your dentist will advise you whether a bridge or implant is the treatment of choice.